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"THAT LITTLE FRENCHMAN."

"THAT LITTLE FRENCHMAN."

A Tale.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SHIP AHOY!"

VOL. I.

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"THAT LITTLE FRENCHMAN."

CHAPTER I.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS.

GATHERING crowd in the gay city of Paris; idlers chattering and taking their places along the edge of the pavement — some knowing why they waited, others profoundly ignorant of all save that there was something to be seen. The fashionable lounger, the bonne with her charge, the workman in his

blouse, soldiers, sergents de ville, and the usual sprinkling of gamins, all were there ready to wait an hour for something less attractive than a royal face.

"He can't be long now, mon cher," said one of a group of well-dressed men. "You are so impatient to get back to those wheels and spindles!"

"Impatient—ma foi! not I," said the one addressed—an eager, little, keen-eyed man of eight and twenty, rather demonstrative of action, as, turning to a lady and gentleman on his left, he drew back with the natural politeness of his nation. "If monsieur will deign," he continued, raising his hat, "madame will be able to see better from where I stand."

The gentleman gave a half-haughty bow in reply; but the lady, with a smile, availed herself of the offered position; a few words in bad French were uttered; and then the movement and excitement in the crowd betokened the approach of the expected cortège.

The roll of wheels, the jingle of cavalry accoutrements, and a scattered volley of shouts,

could now be heard. The crowd pressed forward; the sergents de ville scowled and signed them to back. The lady—evidently English—drew a frown from her companion by turning excitedly to the little Frenchman, her handsome face full of vivacity as she asked him some question as to the meaning of the procession, a question replied to with equal empressement.

"It is the King, Richard, love," she exclaimed the next instant, as she turned to impart her information.

"We are amongst strangers here, Adelaide," was the whispered reply, accompanied by a gloomy look, which made the lady slightly knit her brow and give her head an impatient toss.

"I don't see that we need always carry our insular coldness about with us," she muttered, half contemptuously.

"Messieurs, there is a lady—an English lady—here. I beg you will not press so."

The words were those of the eager little Frenchman, and drawn from him by the movements of a knot of men behind, who crowded upon them somewhat rudely, and though wear-

ing the ouvriers' garb, their aspects did not seem to accord with their dress. So rough, indeed, were their movements, that but for the little Frenchman's outstretched arms the lady would have been forced off the trottoir.

"Thanks—much obliged," exclaimed the lady, and her aide was rewarded with a frank, pleasant smile.

"I am also obliged," said the gentleman, turning half round. "And now," addressing his companion, "come, let us get away from here."

"Only a moment longer," was the reply.

There was not time to say more, for now came the clattering of horses' hoofs; the rolling of carriage wheels; a sudden motion at the lady's side; a deafening explosion as of thunder; and then shrieks, the splintering of glass, cries for help, loud orders, and the panic-stricken crowd rushing here and there, maddened with fear, many to be trampled to death by the plunging horses of the cavalry escort, or crushed beneath the wheels;—then the hurried rush of feet, and those of the fleeing crowd who turned, gazed back upon the bodies of some thirty men,

women, and children, some motionless, some writhing in the dust.

For the deadly missile—the cowardly arm of a desperate band of plotters against the State—had done its work swiftly and surely, though utterly failing in its task so far as the regal carriage had been concerned. Twelve poor creatures had been hurried into eternity, while many more had sustained frightful injuries; the road was torn up; shop windows on either side were beaten in.

But the soldiery had not been idle; and seeing the direction from which the bomb had been thrown, one of the cluster of workmen—a youth—had been seized, and a sergent de ville now had his hand on the shoulder of the little Frenchman, who was supporting the fainting form of the English lady.

"No, no—absurd!" he exclaimed. "It was not I. Leave me to assist this lady."

The officer drew back, having evidently laid hands upon the nearest to him, and joined his companions, who were ready to arrest everybody in the returning crowd.

"Ciel! madame is not hurt?" exclaimed the little Frenchman as the lady unclosed her eyes.

"No, no—only startled. But where is my husband?"

An opening in the crowd answered her question; and, breaking from her supporter, she darted from the place to which she had been borne by the flying people, back to the torn-up pavement, and, with a wild shriek, threw herself upon a prostrate figure.

"Here—quick! Help, here!—two or three!" exclaimed the little Frenchman. "My house is close at hand—bear the English gentleman there. Officer, my name is Rivière, numero 20, Rue d'Auvergne. Let us pass."

The officers gave way, and the insensible Englishman was borne to the appartement of the Frenchman—a well-appointed second floor of a large house—where they were encountered at the door by a young and well-featured lady, who gazed with frightened air from face to face.

"It is nothing, Marie—do not be alarmed.

An English gentleman—an accident. There—there—the couch—good. You—you—fetch instantly a surgeon."

The surgical assistance was soon rendered, and the extent of the injuries shown to be a violent contusion of the head, sufficient to have produced insensibility, but that was all.

"Might he be removed to his hotel?" the lady asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes," said the surgeon, "after a few hours."

If madame would favour him with a card, he would visit the patient again in the evening.

The lady hastily drew a card from a mother-of-pearl case, wrote upon it an address in pencil, and handed it to the surgeon.

Bon. "Sir Richard and Lady Lawler, Hôtel Beaufort." Good. He would pass there in the evening, and meanwhile miladi need be under no anxiety—Sir Richard would soon be well.

"But these Anglais, they have thick skulls!" said the surgeon, with a shrug, as he was shown out by Rivière. "That splinter of bombshell, mon ami, would have crushed through our heads

like as if they had been eggshell. Pouf! voyez vous?"

Rivière nodded, and then returned to his wife.

"Will they stay here, Louis?" she whispered, as she fondly laid a little white hand on his shoulder, gazing with a troubled look in his face.

"Stay? Ma foi! no. I could not do less. It was frightful. And the poor people are strange."

The ringing of a bell was followed by the entrance of a servant.

"The English gentleman and lady wish to see monsieur."

"Bon," said Rivière, turning towards the door. "But stay, little one— Marie, you need not come."

"Yes, yes—do not stop me," she whispered earnestly, as she clung to his hand. "I am weak and foolish, and you will laugh, Louis—but I have only you; and—and—this tall English lady, with her bright, handsome face—she—she looked at you, Louis."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rivière, catching her

in his arms. "Qu'il est beau, this husband of yours. He is a killer of dames with one glance! Silly bird! what are you thinking about? I had not seen them for many minutes. And there is only one Marie in this world."

The next instant husband and wife were clasped in an effusive embrace, and then they parted—the former holding up a threatening finger at the loving face turned towards him.

Rivière entered the next room, to find Sir Richard Lawler sitting up, with Lady Lawler, pale but smiling, standing with one hand resting upon his shoulder.

"Monsieur Rivière," exclaimed the injured man frankly, as he held out his hand, "I am greatly indebted to you, both for my own and my wife's sake. We are very strange and ignorant, and I hardly know how we should have fared but for your kindness."

"But it is nothing," said Rivière, lightly; "and I—we are only too glad. Monsieur would have done as much for me—and for Marie. Let me introduce her."

Rivière hurried to the door, and returned in a few minutes with his wife, when the introductions were gone through; but not without an exhibition of restraint on either side when the ladies touched hands.

"But monsieur will not think of leaving yet for some hours?"

Madame Rivière gazed full in Lady Lawler's face; but the effort was vain, and a pang shot through her little heart as she saw the Englishwoman's bright, bold eyes fixed upon her husband.

"We are greatly obliged," said Lady Lawler, eagerly; "but my husband feels anxious to be back at the hotel, and already we have given you too much trouble."

"But it is no trouble," said Rivière, gravely. "I hold it to have been a duty."

"It is very kind," exclaimed Lady Lawler, hurriedly; "but if you would have a voiture ordered for us, we should be very grateful. And, Richard," she said, turning to her husband, "you had something to say to Monsieur Rivière?"

"Yes, yes—of course," said Sir Richard. "We

are very grateful; and my wife—we hope that you will come and dine with us to-morrow. I shall be all right then. Say you will come."

"I shall be charmed," said Rivière.

"And Madame Rivière, of course," said Lady Lawler, crossing to the pale little wife, and with womanly grace taking her hand. "We wish for an opportunity of thanking your gallant husband for his kindness. You will come?"

Poor Marie Rivière trembled, and a chill seemed to run through her as she gazed in a half-frightened way at the tall, self-possessed beauty at her side. She *was* afraid of her, she owned to herself; and a vague sense of uneasiness oppressed her as she endeavoured to reply cheerfully to the words of gratitude.

But the uneasiness remained; and when, an hour or two afterwards, Lady Lawler bade her farewell, kissing her upon the cheek, and Rivière had gone down with his guests to the fiacre, Marie sank into a chair, anxious and troubled, and sought for relief in tears.

CHAPTER II.

A THUNDERCLAP.

PARIS was in a state of the wildest excitement, and in club and in street men met to discuss the dire effects of the conspiracy, and the almost miraculous escape of the King. Questions innumerable were asked regarding what was to come next, the lovers of law and order trembling as past revolutionary efforts were recalled; but the clouds on the political horizon seemed to trouble Louis Rivière but little, as he sat the next day in the little room he called his atélier, busy fitting together some piece of mechanism whose wheels, pinions, and springs he had been for weeks past con-

structing, ever and anon throwing down file or pointed drill to take up a violin, screw up a string, and then dash off, in an eccentric fashion, some wild refrain or difficult variation. Then, once more the mechanism would be seized, and, with a watchmaker's glass in his eye, he toiled on, till he became aware that his wife was standing, pale and anxious, by his chair.

"Well, p'tite," he exclaimed, turning half round, so as to touch her hand with his lips, "how goes it with you?"

Marie's lip quivered as he uttered those words, but she remained silent; till, turning round in surprise, Rivière saw that tears were stealing down her cheeks, and the next moment she was on her knees, weeping bitterly.

"Is this fair, Marie?" he exclaimed, sternly. "I thought, after what was said this morning, you would have behaved more sensibly. It is silly—childish in the extreme. I say a few words to an English lady, in common politeness, and then fate ordains that I shall bring her to our home to render a little assistance, when, in a foolish fit, you take a violent dislike to her.

I will not call it jealousy: it would be insulting both her and your husband."

"No, no, Louis—do not be angry. It is not that; but I cannot help it. It is as you say: Fate ordained that she should come here; and I fear her, and tremble for what fate may have in the future. But you will not go there to-night?"

"But I certainly shall," he exclaimed, impetuously. "It would be insulting their hospitality were I to stay away; and I should feel that I was wanting in firmness and self-respect were I to listen to your foolish scruples."

"But, Louis!" she exclaimed, excitedly.

"There, there, little one," he said, tenderly—"taisez-vous, and let us have no more of it. Now, if you were jealous of my machine, or of my old Straduarius here, I should not be surprised," he cried, lightly. "But jealousy!—pooh, nonsense! I look like a gay lad, do I not?"

He made a grimace as he drew the agitated woman close to him, and then glanced with a depreciatory look down upon himself before meeting her eyes, which seemed to tell most

plainly that in their sight he had not his equal in the whole world.

"Do not laugh about it, Louis," she said, excitedly. "I feel nervous and troubled. Tell me that you will not go."

"No," he said, firmly, "I shall do no such thing. I shall go. Look here, Marie. We have been married six months; and never, in thought or deed, have I given you cause for discomfort. What you feel in this case is absurd."

"But, Louis," she said, imploringly, "I have another reason. I cannot go; and Monsieur Lemaire is sure—"

"Let us change the subject, my child," he said, taking up a wheel, and once more fitting his glass into his eye. "Ah, Lemaire—you there?" he said, cheerfully, as a tall, gentlemanly young fellow entered, the one who had spoken to him banteringly on the previous day. "Well, and how go the political matters—how the situation?"

"Really," said the new-comer, "I know very little. But how is Madame Rivière?" he said, approaching her with great deference, to receive only a cold and distant inclination of the head

in reply—an inclination that he received with a half-smile as he turned back to Rivière's bench. "When is the Eureka to be finished?"

He took up a wheel to balance on one white finger.

"Finished!" echoed Rivière, "never, I expect. Do you know, Lemaire, that situated as I am, with no occupation, the worst thing that could happen to me would be to get that piece of work finished. What should I do then?"

"Music—madame votre femme," said Lemaire, with a hardly perceptible sneer. "Rivière is no courtier," he continued, turning towards Madame Rivière.

But she only uttered some inaudible reply and left the room, followed by Lemaire's eyes in a strange, furtive fashion—a glance that she encountered for a moment before closing the door.

"Any more arrests made?" queried Rivière, filing away at a wheel.

"Yes, several, I suppose; and they do say that there will be a grand sweep made to-night, as several have been denounced."

"Poor wretches!" said Rivière, in sympathizing

tones. "But ring that bell, and we'll have a cigar and a bottle of Beaume, for I shall be out this evening."

"Out!" said Lemaire, eagerly.

"Yes—to dinner with my new friend, the English milord, and his charming lady."

"Let me see—where did you say they were staying?"

"I don't remember that I said they were staying anywhere; but, all the same, they are at the Hôtel Beaufort."

"Madame goes, of course?"

"Well, yes, if I can persuade her into it," said Rivière. "Perhaps not."

"I don't think I would press her," said Lemaire. "She seems nervous and unwell: I have noticed it these two or three days past. And yesterday's affair did her no good. Have you not seen it?"

"I am ashamed to say that I have not," said Rivière. "But then, we are not all students of medicine, Lemaire. By the way, you ought to have attended the Englishman. Where were you?"

"Oh, I went on to the palace to see how

matters went. You had Conté, I suppose? Well, he's clever."

The wine and cigars were brought in, and Lemaire—a young medical practitioner—sat for some time with his friend; and as at last there seemed no probability of Madame Rivière returning, and in answer to a message sent she excused herself on the plea of a headache, Lemaire rose and left the place, promising to call the following day.

For quite a couple of hours Rivière remained busily engaged at his work bench, till a glance at his watch awakening him to the fact that he had but little time to spare, he hurried out, hoping to find Madame Rivière dressing for the dinner to which they were invited. But again she pleaded a headache; and at last, with some little annoyance, Rivière dressed and started alone for Sir Richard Lawler's hotel, to find the young baronet very little the worse for his accident, while to the excitable young Frenchman Lady Lawler seemed the most charming woman he had yet seen, the result being that the homage he rendered was sufficient to draw an impa-

tient, angry look on several occasions from her husband.

But these looks were lost upon Rivière, who chatted merrily on, played with their child—a bright, sunny-faced boy of a year old—condoled with Sir Richard because he was forbidden wine, with Lady Lawler that there were no fêtes, no reviews, no opera, nothing to make Paris sufferable to so charming a visitor—words which made the husband's brow knit, till the lady, seeing the effect, laughed half contemptuously, and then, with a mischievous glance, laid herself out to receive more and more of the foreign incense so liberally bestowed.

To Rivière the dinner was perfectly charming, and he appeared to be thoroughly enjoying the society of his new friends; but the waiters had no sooner quitted the room than Sir Richard interrupted an extremely complimentary remark by exclaiming—

"Hang it all, Adelaide, I cannot stand this!"

And he rose, and began to stride impatiently up and down the room.

"But I am thoughtless," exclaimed Rivière, rising. "I talk on, and do not think of your weakness. Madame—I beg pardon, miladi—leaves us now. Let us draw up to the window, and have our coffee. Allow me."

He hurried to the door, and opened it for Lady Lawler, bowing in acknowledgment of a smile which sent the blood flushing to her husband's forehead as she swept out of the room. But as Rivière returned to the window, it was with a frank, pleasant look, his clear grey eyes meeting those of his host in a bold, straightforward fashion that was not without its effect upon the baronet.

"But miladi is charming. You are a happy man, Sir Richard."

"I don't know so much about that," said the baronet, awkwardly. And then, evidently striving to drive away unpleasant thoughts, he continued, "But you have no cause to complain."

"Cause to complain?" said Rivière, inquiringly, for the idiom puzzled him.

"Well, then," said Sir Richard, laughing, "ma-

dame is also charming. She should have been here."

"Ma femme—Marie? Yes, is she not?" exclaimed Rivière. "Pauvre enfant! But I love her most dearly. She is weak, though, and unwell, and I ought hardly to have left her; but I was put out—and we French are strange: now we are here, now we are there—we change quickly," he said, gesticulating. "And I am hasty, and she vexed me. But there, with Marie my anger is such that a word blows it away. Pouf! it is gone."

He made as though he blew a morsel of down from his fingers, and again gazed frankly in Sir Richard Lawler's face as the young baronet sat back in his chair, asking himself whether this man was honest, or only a shameless humbug.

The reverie was interrupted by a clanking noise outside the door, a few words were uttered loudly, and Sir Richard Lawler rose angrily as half a dozen gendarmes entered the room, the waiters clustering round the open door.

"What is the meaning of this? What the deuce—how dare you enter without knocking?"

The officer in command raised his eyebrows the slightest shade, and, advancing to the window, said, in cold, formal tones—

"Louis Rivière, you are my prisoner!"

CHAPTER III.

A TROUBLOUS TIME.

—PRISONER! Nonsense—absurd!" exclaimed Rivière, turning pale as ashes. "Sir Richard, this is some mistake—will you explain? You, mon ami," he cried to the officer—"you have mistaken me for some one else."

"Louis Rivière, gentleman, Rue d'Auvergne, numero vingt," said

the officer, coldly, reading from a paper in his hand.

"But for what? Good Heavens! They suspect me of the attempt. Mon Dieu!—my poor Marie!"

At a sign from their leader, a couple of gendarmes placed themselves one on either side of the agonized man, who darted from them to Sir Richard's side, exclaiming, hoarsely—

"This is a mistake; but I know not how it will end. You are a man—you have your wife. Think of my feelings—my pauvre Marie. Will you—will Miladi Lawler go to her, say a few words of comfort—watch over her till I am again at liberty?"

"Indeed, we'll do all we can. Yes, yes—of course," cried Lady Lawler, excitedly; for she had entered and heard the latter part of Rivière's appeal.

The next moment the little Frenchman was bending over the soft, white hand extended to him, to leave upon it a tear; there was the clanking noise of sabres on the floor, the door closed and the sounds died away as Lady Lawler

sank weeping into a chair; while her husband stood silent and moody, as he passed in review the events of the past two days.

"I think it is time we left Paris," he said at last, gruffly. "Nice mess we've made of it!"

"What! and leave these poor people, who played the Samaritan to you, in the midst of trouble? Richard, I'm ashamed of you!" exclaimed Lady Lawler, impetuously. "I really don't think I should have married you if I had known that you could be so mean and shabby. I do hope Cli will not grow up like you. You can leave, though, when you please."

"I go?" said Sir Richard, staring.

"Yes, you can go. And you had better ask papa to come over and take care of me, while I see to your friends, whom you want to leave in the lurch."

"My friends—lurch?"

"Yes; your friends and mine, Dick. I am ashamed of you, that I am. But do you think I can't see through it all—you great silly fellow? You're jealous. And all because that nice little

amiable Frenchman was polite, according to his nature. There, don't touch me. I haven't patience with you."

"But, Addy," pleaded Sir Richard.

"Don't Addy me, sir. Only think! To treat me like this—and so soon! What will it be at the end of—"

There were very strong evidences here of hysterics, and tears were already flowing abundantly. But vows, promises, and offers to do everything the lady wished had their due effect, and at last there was peace in the handsome suite of rooms occupied by Sir Richard Lawler and his lady; while, in a fever of excitement, Louis Rivière impatiently paced the stone floor of his allotted cell.

Truth to tell, Sir Richard Lawler felt but little gratitude towards the man who had been arrested in his apartments; but, urged thereto by his lady, he used every effort to procure Rivière's release, while Lady Lawler called again and again on the prisoner's wife, but only to receive rebuff after rebuff. Marie

Rivière mistrusted her motives, and received her advances with unmistakable coldness.

But all Sir Richard's efforts were vain. Rivière had been denounced as one of the plotters against the King's life; and, in company with two more, was condemned to a long term of imprisonment; while three others were sentenced to death. The three former were considered to be the least culpable; hence their escape from the terrible penalty.

Sir Richard had a couple of interviews with Rivière, when, in a blunt, half-sympathizing manner, he explained how Madame Rivière had declined all offers of assistance, preferring apparently to trust to Monsieur Lemaire; and ended by saying that they departed shortly for their home in London, where he, Sir Richard, would at any future time be glad to see M. Rivière if he would give him a call, and to that effect he gave the prisoner a card.

Rivière smiled as the door closed, and thought bitterly of the future, and of the improbability of his ever seeing the pompous, weak baronet again. Then he thought of his

wife's position, and of her behaviour to Lady Lawler; and then he sat down upon his iron bedstead, to bury his face in his hands, and wonder whether those poor wretches whose heads had fallen by the guillotine's knife could suffer more than did he as day after day and week after week crept on in the customary prison routine.

The thoughts of his wife at times almost maddened him, as he recalled the past, and then thought of how, to all intents and purposes, he was condemned to death; for he was buried in these prison walls, cut off from all communication with the outer world. To those outside —wife, relations, all—he was dead, passed away from the busy world of life. And Marie? Well —why should she not?—she might marry again.

When he had been allowed he had written; and during the interviews permitted while his trial had been in progress, he had given all the instruction he could to his wife; and then he had given way to the despair that oppressed him, sleeping or waking.

Months passed, and he was still in France,

moved from prison to prison, and wondering whether one of the distant colonies was to be his home, when there came a change, and he was placed in a larger cell, with a companion, to pass a further term of this death in life—with one of those who had been implicated in the deed which had been the cause of his own arrest.

CHAPTER IV.

A REVELATION.

TWELVE feet by twelve, fair measure. Four steps forward—the stone wall—turn; four steps backward—the wall—turn. Four steps forward, four steps backward—hour after hour, day after day, week after week; till the thought would come upon the prisoner that his acts were like those of a wild beast in his cage, when he would throw himself upon his rough bed, and lie and glare at his fellow-prisoner, seated where the light streamed in through the window bars, bony-fingered, and plaiting straw.

A contraction of the facial muscles, as Rivière

thought of his own once busy fingers—fingers which he felt that he could only employ now in one way, in tearing at his prison walls; a contortion of the body; and then he would jerk himself round, so that he lay trying to pierce with his eyes the massive stones of his cell—mentally seeing the bright sunshine, the green trees, his own peaceful home, the face of his wife. And then would come clouds over the sunshine—the explosion, the arrest, the trial; and his thoughts would grow so agonizing that he would strive to lull them with fatigue, by leaping up, and once more pacing, like some imprisoned animal, up and down the length of his cell.

"Tonnerre!" he one day exclaimed, angrily snatching the plaited straw from his fellow-prisoner's hand, "you can be at rest in your guilt, while I——"

He checked himself; for in an instant he saw the pettiness of his anger, as his companion's face was turned gently towards him, his hands raised deprecatingly, and a smile that would have disarmed the fiercest wrath met his own angry glare.

Rivière was conquered; and, slowly crossing the cell, he picked up the straw plait, returned it to his fellow-prisoner, and then once more threw himself upon his pallet.

But not for long. Lithe and active, goaded by the recollection of his position, he again sprang from the bed, his breast heaving as if for air; and then, with a bound, he leaped up at the window, clasped the bars with his fingers, and by sheer muscular force drew himself up so as to gaze out at a dreary blank wall.

Then came the sound of a heavy pace outside, a few muttered words, an angry reply from the prisoner, a blow or two from the butt-end of a musket, and, with bruised and bleeding fingers, Rivière fell back into his cell, to stand shaking impotently a throbbing hand at the blank wall, and hiss at the aggressor the one word "Dog!"

"How long will it take us to go quite mad?" he exclaimed, after once more striding up and down. "I am half mad now; but I mean quite, so as to be beyond the reach of thought and the recollections of the bygone."

There was no reply from the straw plaiter, and another interval of pacing up and down ensued, when Rivière paused before his patient companion.

"Look here, silent Pierre," he cried, and the young man's pale face was turned up towards him, though the busy fingers still twisted straw after straw into its appointed place—"look here. I thought to find rest with a comrade; but you only madden me. You know that I was not in the plot. I told you when I was brought in."

"Yes, I declared it at the trial."

"I have told you a hundred times, have I not, that I was standing in the crowd with my friend?"

"With your friend," assented Pierre.

"Yes, with Lemaire."

"With whom?" said the other.

"With my friend, Etienne Lemaire, chirurgien—have I not told you his name a hundred times?"

"No; you never mentioned it till now."

"Wait, and I will tell you. I was standing to

see the King pass, when there was the explosion, and I was borne away in the crowd with the English miladi."

"But you were denounced, Rivière."

"Yes, I was denounced," said the other, bitterly, "by some Government spy."

"You were denounced by Etienne Lemaire."

"What?"

There was a minute's pause, during which Rivière glared at his companion.

"You were denounced by Etienne Lemaire."

"I said how long did it take to make men quite mad, Pierre," said Rivière, with a ghastly face, as he came nearer. "I know now: just as long as you have been in prison; for you are mad to declare such a thing. Do I not tell you that Lemaire was my friend?"

"He may have had some motive."

"Motive? How could he have? He was my friend, and I lent him money—ample—thousands of francs. He lived often at my table. He attended my wife when she was ill."

"Your wife? She was very handsome, was she not?"

"Was?—she is! Une ange—and she is left to despair—to— Ah! mon Dieu."

Rivière groaned as if stricken by a sudden blow; the veins in his forehead swelled, his mouth twitched, and he glared at his companion as if he would have sprung at him. Then, by an effort, he recovered himself, saying with a grim smile—

"I am better now. It was a foolish thought—an inspiration from the tempter—evil promptings from the father of lies. But, tchut! Do not speak of my wife again. The air of this hideous cage contaminates her name."

He walked up and down again for a few minutes before pausing once more in front of the straw-plaiter, and, taking hold of his work—

"Why do you do this?" he said.

"Why do I do it! Why have men carved the stones of these prison walls, written upon their linen with a fish-bone pen? For rest and forgetfulness. It is something to do—something to kill thought—something to achieve. Try it—you."

"Pish!" exclaimed Rivière, fretfully.

And again he paced the cell; but only to stop once more, and gaze in his companion's face as if he expected him to speak.

"It was bad for you—that workshop of yours," said Pierre. "They said at the trial it was full of deadly mechanism."

"Yes, yes—the fools, the idiots. Lathe, tools, chemicals—my amusements from a boy. They seized and destroyed them all, saying that each innocent machine—upon which I had lavished years of thought and toil—was a diabolical construction. But you—you were in the plot?"

"Yes," said Pierre, slowly, "I was in the plot. I was dragged into it. I could not help myself."

"And I suffer—she suffers. We are called upon to bear the punishment of your crimes. Fiend—dog!"

"Help—help!" screamed the younger prisoner, faintly; but his voice sounded half stifled, for Rivière had seized him by the throat, and borne him back against the wall.

The struggle was but short, for the cries brought in the gaoler and a couple of sentries, one of whom sent Rivière staggering back with

a heavy blow from the butt end of his musket; and the next minute they dragged him across the cell to his bed, threw him on it, and secured him there with straps.

"Don't hurt him," pleaded the younger man; "it was all my fault—I angered him. He will be quiet if you set him free. We are friends now, Rivière, are we not?"

The latter nodded sullenly; and after a few moments' consideration, the gaoler leant over him, and cast loose the straps, grumbling loudly the while, as he snatched and pulled at the buckles, causing the prisoner acute pain. Then, muttering threats of what he should report, he slowly left the cell with the sentries, and the prisoners were once more alone.

"Why did you not let them punish me?" hissed Rivière.

"Because you were only mad for the time, and I did not wish to be here alone," said Pierre. "Together, it is more bearable."

"Yes, I am a madman—a wild beast," exclaimed Rivière. "My thoughts seem to be all barbed points, and goad me into fury. You will

forgive me, though, Pierre. You could not withhold your pardon if you knew all I suffered. Will you take my hand?"

He held it out, and it was taken frankly.

"Yes, yes, I forgive you," said Pierre; and then, with a sigh, he returned to his straw-plaiting, while Rivière resumed his hurried walk backward and forward.

After a while he paused once more before the straw-plaiter.

"Tell me," said he, "how many days since the trial?"

The young man drew from his pocket a small bag, out of which he took five round pieces of bone, and a number of short scraps of straw.

"I cannot recollect without these," he said, counting them over. "See, here are five bones, each stands for fifty; forty-five straws. Two hundred and ninety-five days."

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Rivière, dashing his hands to his forehead. "Two hundred and ninety-five days and nights of agony! But it cannot last—it cannot last."

"You must work," said Pierre. "It is the only rest."

Rivière seemed not to hear him; but paced the cell in the same restless, wolfish way, till he stopped suddenly before his busy-fingered companion.

"Look here, look here!" he cried, gesticulating fiercely. "I know what you think. You would have it that my friend had designs of his own—that he wished me away; but, pah! I laugh at such folly. It is not true. I drive such thoughts away as you would so many scraps of your straw."

He sat down upon the edge of his bed, with a scornful laugh curling his lips, and remained there, buried in thought, until the last ruddy light of evening had faded from the cell—till the heavy, echoing sound of steps was heard in the stone passage. Then bolts were drawn with a heavy clang, and a gaoler, guarded by two soldiers, whose muskets gleamed in the light they carried, thrust in a black loaf of sour bread and some water. The door was then banged to and bolted, and, after the

echoing footsteps had died away, all was silent.

The food was taken by Pierre, who placed his straw-plaiting aside with a sigh, ere he broke the bread, and passed one-half of it across to Rivière, who heeded him not.

After awhile, Pierre took the great water jug, and raised it to his lips; but recollecting himself, he, with all a Frenchman's politeness, lowered the vessel without tasting the contents.

"Drink, mon ami," he said, passing it to Rivière; but the latter motioned him away, and muttering something about fatigue, threw himself back upon his pallet, and turned his face to the wall.

Pierre sat munching his bread slowly, with his face turned towards the shadowy corner where his fellow-prisoner lay. He ate slowly, moistening his poor fare again and again with water from the jug—the light growing fainter and more faint. At times he softly shook his head and muttered a few words—then, too, he would sigh; but, none the less, he applied himself diligently to his repast, picking the

crumbs delicately, pausing over choice scraps of crust—for it was his dinner, and meagre as was the food, it was eaten with a relish to the last crumb.

Darkness at last, and then Pierre turned to his couch.

"Bon soir, mon ami," he said.

There was no reply. Rivière seemed to be sleeping heavily, and soon the occasional tramp, tramp of the sentry outside was all that broke the stillness of the night.

CHAPTER V.

THE SWORD WEARS THE SCABBARD.

IT must have been about midnight that Rivière rose from his couch. No sooner had Pierre's lightly drawn and regular breathing told that he slept, than his fellow-captive had softly raised himself, to sit with his head leaning against the stone wall. The big drops of sweat—begotten by the agony of his spirit—stood upon his forehead. His countenance was drawn and ghastly, and he drew his breath from time to time with a sharp, cutting sob.

It was his hour for going over the past, and he was reviewing once more the scenes of the

attempted assassination of the King, of his own arrest, and the long, tedious trial. But soon came other thoughts, such as made his eyes grow hot and seem to burn him; for to his old recollections was added the fruitage of the suggestion uttered by Pierre.

That was a bitter seed, and it had fallen in ground long prepared for its reception. It burst its envelope, shot forth, and grew hugely, as its recipient ran over in his mind the motives that might have moved his friend and wife.

Let him see! Why, yes, his friend's evidence must have been all false and villainous—that of his wife simple and truthful. For what had she said? To be sure—yes—that her husband was mechanical, spending many hours in his little atélier performing experiments.

Oh, damning evidence!—all serving to prove him guilty before those who sought for the makers of that infernal machine whose mission was to destroy the life of the King, and which had, in Rivière's presence, been hurled at the passing carriage.

And now it was midnight; and barefooted the

prisoner paced his cell, maddened almost by the rush of thought. At times he paused, feeling ready to dash his head against the cruel walls which closed him in; and a bitter smile crossed his lip as he thought of their impotence if he liked to set himself free.

Then he started, for a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Of what are you thinking?"

"Of death!"

Question and answer seemed to fall heavily upon the ears of the speakers, and Pierre shivered as he held fast by his companion's arm.

"It will come but too soon," he said at length. "Let us wait, and first see those we love."

He led Rivière towards the straw bed; and then, seeing him throw himself wearily upon it, he stood gazing at the indistinct form.

"You would not be so mad," he said.

But there was no response; and after a time he turned, cold and shuddering, to his own couch.

"I will watch him," he said to himself; and he supported himself upon his arm, gazing in-

tently in the direction of his fellow-prisoner's bed, and trying to pierce the darkness. Now he almost succeeded in defining the figure upon the straw pallet; but soon it seemed to fade away gradually into obscurity, and then again to loom up large and ominous.

Suppose he should attempt his life! How horrible to be present, shut up there till morning! Tchut! it was absurd. Over-excitement and — and — no, not morning yet. He would watch, though—and—

Pierre was sleeping soundly, in spite of dread and trouble; and Rivière was again seated upon his bed's edge, sleepless, and wandering in a maze of doubt, chasing two phantoms—those of his fair young wife, and the friend so trusted and aided by his purse.

Doubt? He had not had a single suspicion till now. But now! caged here, and Marie exposed to the machinations of a villain—it was horrible! But was she innocent?

A thousand simple acts now grew distorted, and clothed in a garb of suspicion. Wild thoughts assailed his brain, and clenching his

hands, and glaring with bloodshot eyes into the darkness, he sat panting, gasping for breath.

He threw himself upon the pallet and closed his eyes, but no sleep came. Thoughts still pressed upon him in a confused crowd. But towards morning came a fitful slumber, during which wild dreams chased one another through his brain. He was free. His wife was smiling upon him, and he was pressing forward to clasp her to his breast; when Lemaire dashed him to the ground, pressed his heel upon him, and forced him down—down—lower and lower—into his cell, where he held him, till, by a mighty effort, he threw him off, and then seized him by the throat with a cry of rage.

"The matter? No—nothing. I was dreaming."

Rivière was sitting up, every nerve throbbing with excitement as he spoke, and his hand stole to his face, to find it streaming with perspiration.

"It is nothing. Go to sleep. It is hot and insufferable. I can hardly breathe."

Pierre, who had been awakened by his companion's cry, lay down once more, trying to watch, but ever baffled by the obscurity. He could make out the grated window—just faintly seen—but now that was all. He would not sleep, though, again—of that he was determined; and in the morning he would tell their gaoler to watch, for Rivière was not to be trusted. Should he ask to be separated from him? No. That would be worse. But suppose anything should happen? How dreadful! Here, though, was the sword wearing out its scabbard; and, unless a change came, it was within the bounds of probability that they would be separated by the cold, grim hand of which he—young and hopeful still—could not think without a shudder.

Rivière was now quiet—sleeping, evidently. Poor fellow, how he suffered! And it was evident that by the words spoken to-day a fresh wound had been opened.

The dawn at last. There was his fellow-prisoner's figure, just a little less indistinct, and Pierre gave a sigh of relief, for the day seemed

to come with a watchful eye to ward off peril; and, worn out with his disturbed night, the young man dropped off fast asleep once more.

He must have slept for hours, for there was that light in the cell which showed that the sun was shining somewhere, when he awoke with a start of horror, to leap from his bed, and seize Rivière by the arm.

Another minute and he would have been too late.

CHAPTER VI.

RIVIERE MAKES PLANS.

RE you mad, Rivière?"

The question was asked by Pierre, as he stood holding the other by the wrists, and gazing fixedly in his eyes.

"Mad? — yes," was the reply, given at last in a deep, hoarse voice. "It is enough to make me. But, there, let go—it is over now."

And with a sigh that was almost a groan, Rivière crept shivering away to the darkest

corner of their cell, and sat there motionless till the coming of the gaoler with their morning meal.

The interval had been spent by Pierre with his eternal straw plait, which grew yard by yard, and was rolled in a neat coil as he went on.

"Breakfast," said Pierre, as soon as they were alone; and he laid his hand upon his companion's shoulder.

To his surprise, Rivière rose up, calm and thoughtful-looking, holding out his hand, which the other grasped with effusion.

"That is better," he said.

"Better?" replied Rivière, with a sad smile. "Well, yes—I think so. One must live; for there is much to do in the future. Pierre, I was mad all last night; but that is past now, and I have begun to think out the future. I thank you for saving my life. But it will go hard with others."

Pierre looked searchingly at his fellow-prisoner, wondering whether a greater madness were not on him now; but it was only to see him sit and

eat quietly of the bread, and drink the poor, thin coffee brought for their morning meal.

Days glided by, with Rivière turned thoughtful and silent. The restless pacing of the floor was at an end, and for hours he would not stir, but sat as if revolving some plan. The restless nights, too, ceased, and the prison seemed at times quite cheerful to Pierre, when his companion sat down and conversed with him quietly about some ordinary matter—the length of his straw plait, the quality of the food, or the gloom or brightness of the day.

"There is something to come of this," thought Pierre; and at times a shiver of apprehension ran through him.

Was this the calm that was to be succeeded by a storm—by a maniacal outbreak?

He watched Rivière nervously by day, and at night he never retired without a feeling of dread, lest, even if his fellow-prisoner refrained from attacking him, he should find him some morning dead by his own hand.

And yet all seemed very much altered. Rivière was, to all appearances, quiet and re-

signed to his fate; and by degrees the apprehensions of Pierre became lulled, till one morning they broke out afresh, for Rivière said to him, quietly—

"The sharpened nail, Pierre, that you took away from me that morning—you have it safe?"

"Safe?—yes. Hidden away where you could never find it," exclaimed Pierre, excitedly.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rivière, smiling sadly. "I shall not attempt suicide again. I was mad that morning, Pierre; but it is all past now, and I mean to live. There, do not look so suspiciously at me. I am not trying to deceive you. Only, keep that nail safely—we may require it."

No more passed that day nor the next; and straw plait after plait was made, and sold for a trifle by the gaolers of the prison; the money obtained being expended in some little attempt to alleviate the wretchedness of their fare. Pierre grew more and more satisfied with the behaviour of his companion; for Rivière began to plait straw by his side, working with tolerable neatness, till Pierre exclaimed, one day—

"There, did I not tell you how this work would prove a relief?"

To his amazement, Rivière did not reply, but sat busily using his fingers; till, suddenly, he threw down the plait and said—

"Never mind the straw. Do you feel certain that this is La Peray?"

"Yes—certain," was the reply. "And this must be the Gironde passing by the walls."

"The Gironde? Yes—the river we crossed when they brought us in. Do you think they mean to keep us here?"

"Who can say? See how we have been changed about already. There are far-off islands where we might be taken—Cayenne, Martinique; or perhaps they may keep us at home here, for are there not the galleys at Toulon?" said Pierre, bitterly.

And he sighed as he thought of the hard labour, and looked at his soft white hands.

"Even that would be better, out in the free air," exclaimed Rivière, with animation. "But," he continued, grimly, "there is escape from it all."

"Hush!" whispered Pierre, shuddering as he recalled how that morning he had arrested his companion's hand just as, in his mad despair, he was about to pierce his throat with a nail he had contrived to draw from their table, and had sharpened on the stone floor to a keen edge. "Hush! That will come in its own good time. It is not for us—"

"But I mean real escape," said Rivière, with animation—"escape from here, and, if needs be, fight for our liberty."

"Escape!" exclaimed Pierre, gazing with a startled aspect at the speaker, as if he doubted his sanity. "What! Get out — away from prison?"

"Yes; escape—freedom."

"But how?" said Pierre, excitedly.

"Let us think it out," was the reply. "But first, how long have we been here?"

The little bag of pieces of straw was once more brought into requisition, and after counting, Pierre said—

"Six weeks to-day."

"Six weeks!—six weeks only! It seems like

a year. But let us think it out. Don't speak to me now."

He went and sat down upon the edge of his bed, wrinkled up his face, and remained silent for quite an hour, during which Pierre looked up from his straw-plaiting from time to time, to scrutinize the earnest face before him.

Twice he essayed to draw Rivière into conversation upon the engrossing theme; but without further result than a sign to be silent.

And in this fashion ended the day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WATCHWORD.

THE night passed without a sign from Rivière, and the younger man lay restless and feverish, the words he had heard having raised up exciting visions for the future. Towards morning, though, he dropped asleep, to dream of freedom; but his rest was brief, for at daybreak he was aroused by Rivière shaking him roughly.

"Up!" said the latter, sternly—"up, quickly. We have wasted time, and now we must work."

"What for?" said Pierre.

"What for? For liberty and justice. Now to begin."

They sat down in the corner of the cell, talking for a while; then, rising, Rivière walked to the wall beneath the grated window of their cell, and leaned his arms against it, stooping so as to form of his body an incline, up which Pierre climbed, so that he was able to stand upon his companion's back, hold on by the bars, and gaze long and earnestly from the grating.

Now and again there came the slow, measured tramp of the sentry on duty, whose beat lay right beneath their window; and at such times Pierre would loose his hold upon the bars, and, merely steadying himself by resting his fingers upon the sill, stoop down, and wait impatiently until the soldier had passed.

Three times this had occurred, and as often the inspection was resumed, Rivière always replying to his companion's query as to whether he was tired—

"Go on."

At last the sentry paused just in front of the grated window, and they heard him ground

his musket upon the pavement. Pierre leaped lightly down, and together they retired to the cell corner.

"Well," said Rivière, in a whisper, "what in the front?"

"High wall."

"And on the left?"

"A higher wall."

"The right?"

"Wall, whose top I cannot see."

"Could you see nothing more?" asked Rivière.

"Nothing but cruel, hard, cold stones everywhere."

"But if you had stood higher?"

"My head touched the top of the opening as it was," said Pierre, gloomily; and then the prisoners sat thinking.

"We *must* escape, Pierre," said Rivière, after half an hour's silence.

"Yes; but how?" said the other, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

"By constant trying. The rat gnaws his way through where he will."

"Yes; but we are no rats," said Pierre, bitterly.

"And the bird beats at its wires, or the door, till the first grow loose, or the latter is unfastened," continued Rivière, without heeding his companion's words.

"Or wears its poor breast bare of feathers, and dies of a broken heart," cried Pierre, passionately. "Let it rest! What can we do in this stony tomb but write our epitaphs upon its walls, and then lie down quietly and die?"

"As you deserve to die," said Rivière, "for being a coward. You would have killed the King."

"No," said Pierre, eagerly, "I would not. I begged that he might be spared, though he had cruelly persecuted those who belonged to me. It was in a mad fit of revenge, mingled with what they called patriotism, that they were bent upon his destruction. What could I do? Would you have had me denounce—"

Rivière started as if he had been stung.

"Would you have had me give up those who

were my relatives and friends? Was the King to be more to me than these?"

"But you countenanced the deed with your presence."

"Yes; but was I not forced? They knew that I was against the plot, so they would not trust me, lest I should betray them. So I was made to be a witness of it all."

Pierre shuddered as he spoke.

"It was a cowardly, cruel act," said Rivière; "and one for which others suffer. Look at me."

"I declared you were innocent a score of times," said Pierre, passionately; "but they would not hear me."

"Let that pass now," said Rivière. "We have other things to think of."

He rose from his seat, and slowly and carefully began to examine every stone in the floor and walls of the cell—tapping each with his knuckles, and testing the cement in the interstices with the tooth from a metal comb. Now he was in the dark corners, now reaching high up above his head; but every step was taken

earnestly, and with an air of keen investigation which nothing escaped.

A word from Pierre arrested him, and in two steps he was at his seat, calmly picking his nails; for there was the sound of footsteps outside, gradually coming nearer. Then came a cessation of the steps, the rattling of bolts and keys; and then the gaoler appeared with their rations, which he placed upon their bench, whilst his two attendants looked round the place, examining wall and window.

Another minute, and the door was once more banged to, and bolted, and the steps heard to go echoing away.

"Eat," said Rivière, pushing the black bread to his companion. "We have only one thing to think of now — escape. Eat, and grow strong; for we shall need all our power."

The miserable meal was eaten in silence; and then, with his eyes glittering and his teeth set, Rivière rose up.

"Now, then," he said, "put away that straw plait. We must get to work, for I cannot sit

down, and die here. I must meet her again, face to face."

"But mind, I do not accuse her," said Pierre.

"Nor I," said Rivière. "My wife—Madame Rivière—shall have her opportunities for defence. I am no foolish Othello in my passions; but, as the judge said to me at my trial, the case looks black against her; and as to Lemaire—"

He said those last words through his teeth, and then stopped, breathing hard, with an intensity in his expression of countenance that made Pierre shudder, as he thought over the possible result of a meeting between these men.

"Have patience," said Pierre. "Time works strange changes. Matters are, perhaps, not so bad as we have painted them."

And once more he took up the straw plait, and began to add to its length.

"Patience!" exclaimed Rivière, angrily. "Life is too short for patience, and we have much to do, instead of waiting for it to be done. Life, Pierre, must henceforth for us be wild, exciting, feverish. We must work together for life, since

the existence here is but death. And now, once more—escape! You hear that word? It is to be henceforth, till we are free, our watchword—our sole thought, our very life. Escape! You know what it means? It is a secret that we must penetrate. There will be obstacles and dangers, sleepless nights and restless days, pain and weariness, bitter suffering; but it will always cheer us on, and we must achieve our liberty, or die in the attempt. You understand—you are with me?"

"Yes," said Pierre, "to the end."

"Then we shall succeed," cried Rivière.

"Yes," said Pierre, with his face lighting up —"escape!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ARRIVAL.

IT must have been the size of the house that made people in it given to yawn, for the houses in Grosvenor-square are of goodly proportions. In summer time, the very windows, half open, seem to be in the act of yawning, and the great door likewise, when "the family" are out at a dinner party, and the butler and gentlemen in uniform are cooling themselves, and yawning upon the whitened steps.

As a rule, houses in Grosvenor-square are not taken by their inhabitants: they come to them by birth, inheritance—though generally

with the clog upon them of a yearly rental of no slight sum. In fact, the rent is stated in three figures, and those of goodly size.

Sir Richard Lawler only had to walk into possession of his house in Grosvenor-square when he came of age. In fact, his was not a brain that would have achieved a mansion. He found it well-furnished, too, but yawning; and he yawned, till he awoke one day to the fact that the place was not completely furnished without a wife.

Even here he had no trouble, for his friends selected the lady for him; and one day, when he was weary of hunting, tired of throwing salmon flies, aching of foot with tramping the heather, and sick of the sea in his yacht, he proudly walked up the carpeted steps of St. George's, Hanover-square, and afterwards descended them with the hand of that acknowledged beauty, Adelaide, Lady Lawler, upon his arm.

They were very happy—they must have been, for they told everybody that they were—and all friends congratulated themselves upon the accession to the visiting list.

Time glided on. They travelled on the Continent; returned to England; visited, and were visited. An heir was born, made much of; and then followed another visit to the Continent, ending with a stay at Paris, and the encounter with the Rivières.

Sir Richard Lawler was a very good-hearted man, and he really exerted himself strongly to procure Rivière's freedom. He would also have done anything possible to aid Madame Rivière; but, as we have seen, all advances were rejected, seeing that they came through Lady Lawler; and soon after the English milor returned to town, and after a few squabbles—an inelegant term this, but most apropos—with her ladyship, London life began again, the customary yawnings took place in the big mansion, and the Rivières were forgotten.

There had been festive proceedings in Grosvenor-square, for the Lawlers had given a dinner party. Dinner parties were not unusual there; but this had been an extra affair, wherein the aid of the florist and pastrycook was called, and

Edgington had the task of forming one of his zebraic canopies from the kerbstone to the front door. Lady Lawler had been gorgeous in the family diamonds, and, at dessert-time, there had been a small procession :

Footman, bearing a high chair.
Chief butler, with special dessert plate and d'oyley.
Jane, bearing the heir, in white and scarlet.
Rear-guard of Sarah.

The heir was greeted with a chorus of feminine raptures; and the bearer had to pause at chair-backs for the family hope to be kissed, with kisses loud and chirruppy—little liberties these, which he resented with dabs of his podgy fists. What time Papa, at the foot of the table, smiled like an amiable aristocrat in wax ; Mamma shook her fan, and said, "Naughty Tivey"—a sweet, feminine, lisping formation of the baptismal name Clive; and Jane adjured her charge to "be a good boy, then," with the sole effect of the young

monster making a dab at a dowager's front, and dragging it hugely askew.

Jane—a fresh-coloured, plump nurse of five and twenty, glowing with health and pink ribbons—stayed behind his Heirship's chair when he was beside mamma, it being an acknowledged fact that she was the only personage in the house who could subdue the young gentleman in times of mutiny; and matters went on tolerably satisfactorily, save that Master Clive upset a finger-glass over the black kerseymeres of the Right Honourable Randall Spavin, M.P. for Mowbray, and M.F.H., Hippoly county.

This little mishap, though to a guest, was quite balanced by the next display of a mercurial temperament, wherein the hope of the house swept a glass of port from the table to meander down the amber glories of Lady Lawler's moiré antique.

But in a lively child such trifles are easily forgiven; and who, as a guest, would refrain from an amused smile when the excited child stood up, regardless of remonstrance, in his chair, and then made a dart, and scrambled on to the table

to achieve possession of the elephant-supported sugar temple? but only to be caught by one leg by Jane, and reseated in the high chair with a sponge cake in his fist.

"He was so full of life," Lady Lawler smilingly informed her guests.

Then Jane had to be busy for a few minutes picking up dessert forks, spoons, a plate and a wine glass in two pieces; and at last, at a signal from her master—a signal resented by a reproachful look from her ladyship—the girl had to seize upon her charge, and prepare to bear him out of the room.

But this attack was met furiously by the heir, who commenced his defence with a howl of rage, and was then borne out, kicking and screaming furiously, making, too, little snatches at Jane's hair, or the head-dress of any lady he passed.

He continued to make himself heard in a cheery diminuendo, lasting from the dining-room door to the nursery on the second floor, where the closing of a baize door resulted in peace to the house below.

"Very passionate, but a dear, affectionate

child," said Lady Lawler, apologetically, to the Honourable Randall.

"All the spirit in him for making a good cross-country rider," said the master of fox-hounds.

"Sign of health—fine lungs," observed the family physician.

"Give way to him because he's so young," said Sir Richard, who was rather annoyed.

"Oh, dear me, yes," simpered her ladyship, rising with the other ladies, and departing for the drawing-room.

The wine, the coffee, the tea upstairs—all had followed in due course. A few friends had dropped in during the evening. Carriages had come and carriages had gone, and an extra amount of yawning had been performed in the hall. Taking advantage of Master Clive having sobbed himself soundly asleep, Jane had left him in charge of the under-nurse, and descended to get her supper in the servants' hall; but she was not to reach the bottom without her adventure—being caught on the stairs by Mr. James, one of the footmen, who tried to display his emotions

towards the fair maiden by passing his arms round her, and stealing a kiss.

The attempt was a signal failure, for Jane gave him a sharp box on the ear, which sent the hair powder flying in a cloud; and when the recipient emerged therefrom, the damsel had gone.

"A hard-hearted creecher!" exclaimed the injured swain.

He probably meant hard-handed; but he said no more—only retired to the pantry, where he administered a few more dabs of the scented starch to his well-oiled locks, and then proceeded to the servants' hall.

No Jane!

Making some excuse, he rose and left his place, going gently down a long stone passage to the front of the house. Here he turned into the housekeeper's sanctuary—a large press-surrounded room, looking upon the area.

It was as he expected. Going close to the window, he could dimly see two figures—one of each sex—talking eagerly together; and Mr James gave a groan as he stood with clenched fists. There was the secret of the contumely

with which his advances were met—there was the reason, in the shape of a man!

James ground his teeth, as he stood watching for a few minutes, and then a spasm seemed to seize him as he witnessed a hasty good-bye, wherein something took place not followed by a box on the ear; and then, as the area gate clanged and the door closed, Mr. James followed the slightly flushed object of his misplaced affection to the servants' hall, breathing hard as he watched her at her supper—always avoiding his eye—eating nothing himself, but drinking freely horns of ale from the great black-jack.

But all this was over. The last guest had departed; and, previous to retiring for the night, Sir Richard was having a cigar in the study, while his lady was dreamily watching the golden caverns in the fire as the cinders fell together with a musical tinkle. Twice she glanced up at Sir Richard; but he was deep in the contemplation of the wreaths of vapour rising from his cigar, and doubtless his reverie would have ended in a doze, had not a loud, resonant peal at the bell made both start, and gaze towards the door.

The step of one of the servants was heard to pass the door, and then followed the sounds of unbolting, rattling chain, and loud shoot back of lock; and then, as a gust of wind swept through the hall, it brought with it the whispering of eager voices.

A minute or two elapsed, and then, when Sir Richard's patience was nearly exhausted, and he was about to see for himself the cause of this late interruption, the footman appeared at the door.

"Well?"

"If you please, Sir Richard, here's a foreign party as says he must see you."

"A what?"

"A furrener, Sir Richard, and a wom—I mean a lady—with him. Wouldn't give no card, Sir Richard."

"But what's his name?—what business?"

"Wouldn't give no name; and said, as far as I could make out, Sir Richard, as he had no business; but he's a very ignorant party, Sir Richard—couldn't hardly speak English. I did tell him to come in the morning; but he said he must see you now."

"Good heavens, Richard!" exclaimed Lady Lawler, in an agitated voice, as she rose, and leaned over his chair. "Can it be——"

"There, I don't know—I will see," exclaimed Sir Richard, his face flushing with annoyance. "Leave the room, James. No, stop—I will see these people. Show them into the dining-room."

"Yes, Sir Richard."

And the man turned to go.

"What sort of people are they?"

"Rather shabby parties, Sir Richard."

"Show them in here, James," said Lady Lawler, in a tone of voice that made her husband start; for though in some things her ladyship was but woman and water, in others she was spirit itself.

"Yes, m'lady," said the man, as he backed out; and the next minute he ushered in a couple of closely muffled figures, who stood perfectly still while Sir Richard motioned the man to leave the room, which he did; but not so rapidly but that he saw a portion of that which followed. Nor did he close his ears so tightly that he was

unable to catch from his lady the exclamation—

"Good heavens!"

And from his master the words—

"Monsieur Rivière!"

CHAPTER IX.

FINDING A HAVEN.

THE library door was not closed before James had seen and heard enough to make him go downstairs and declare to his sleepy fellow-servant in the hall that there was "about as rum a start up stairs as ever *he* knew on." For Grosvenor-square is not at all a romantic place, either in or

out of the season. Mysteries do not often come under the notice of the attendants at the great mansions; for matters, as a rule, go on in as regular a beat as that of the policeman who occasionally turns the light of his bull's-eye down the various areas, of course to see that no burglarious attempts are made to reach the plate chests of the vicinity, as the tradespeople call it in their circulars; though it is quite within the range of probability that "the stern myrmidon of the law" (see report in *North-Western News*) is just as often thinking of surreptitious visitors to the maidens of the house as of the Hall-marked forks and spoons reclining in their green baize beds.

James's fellow-servant gave utterance to something that was destroyed in its articulateness by a yawn, and then helped himself to another horn of ale, hardly attending to the history of the "rum start" upstairs, though even he allowed that the proceedings were very strange.

For before the door closed, Louis Rivière had stepped forward, caught Lady Lawler's hand in both of his, and kissed it again and again, before

seizing Sir Richard's, and treating his in the same fashion. In fact, but for a retrograde motion on the part of the baronet, the visitor would have caught him in his arms, and kissed him on both cheeks; and it was with a sigh of relief that he felt the Continental salute fall upon extremities easily afterwards immersed in a basin of water.

"You here, Monsieur Rivière!" exclaimed Lady Lawler; while Sir Richard remained perfectly silent, not even offering a chair to his visitors.

"Oui, miladi—I am here at last. But my wife here, poor child, she is fainting. We have journeyed long. We have not eaten this day. A glass of water—a piece of bread!"

As he spoke he darted back to his companion, who stood motionless, closely muffled, and leaning against the table. With a foreigner's demonstrativeness, he took her to his heart, fondling her as if she were a weary child; and then, asking consent with his eyes, he led her to an easy chair, where she lay back, cold and exhausted with her journey.

Whatever may have been the thoughts of Sir Richard Lawler, the sight of the pale, haggard woman, whose great eyes seemed to glare appealingly, brought him to himself in an instant. Before Lady Lawler could reach her side, Sir Richard had left the room, returning soon with wine and glasses, which he brought in himself, much to the disgust of James, who was eager to see what was going on in what he termed the "libery." But, upon this occasion, he had not so much as a glance through the crack of the door; and he descended, vowing that, if there was much more "of this here sorter thing going on in the house, he knew jolly well what he should do. He wasn't going to be kept out of his bed all night because of that little Frenchman."

Very excusable this, for James was tired. He took no interest in the fresh visitors, who were very shabby, and not likely to allay the itching of his palm; and, lastly, he had been made not only to smart from a blow, but to awaken to the fact that there was a hated rival in his path.

In the meantime, Sir Richard Lawler, with all

a gentleman's hospitality, was doing his best to set his visitors at their ease. At first, bitter recollections of the past had flashed through his mind, bringing up Rivière's openly displayed admiration for La Belle Anglaise, and his wife's rather frivolous conduct; but the knowledge of the misery through which the refugees had passed, and the sight of their helplessness and distress as they silently appealed to him for his aid, awoke all the better feelings of his nature. Driving all ungenerous thoughts away, he vied with his wife in his attentions to the half-fainting woman in the chair.

In spite of her suffering and weakness, Madame Rivière had at first shrunk from Lady Lawler; but the tender earnestness with which the Englishwoman ministered to her soon won upon her impulsive nature, and in a short time her arms were wildly flung round her hostess, and she was weeping hysterically upon her bosom.

"Weep—it will relieve," said Rivière, in a voice of ineffable tenderness. "Pauvre enfant! —what she has suffered!" and he laid his hand

reverently upon the dishevelled head of his wife; while Sir Richard walked softly up and down the room, pretending to whistle, but all the while crying indirectly—that is to say, through the nose.

CHAPTER X.

BEATING THE BARS.

THE house in Grosvenor-square was very silent, for at last the servants were dismissed. The tiny bell in the great bronze clock over the fireplace had chimed out the half-hour after two, but there were still three occupants of the library. Lady Lawler had just returned from seeing, with all a sister's kindness, her visitor to the room that had been made ready, and now stood leaning upon her husband's shoulder, as Rivière once more reverently crossed to where she stood, and raised and kissed her hand.

"But you have been good to my poor Marie,"

he said, softly. "Is it that you English are all angels, and we French but fiends? Look you, I cross our land hunted. They would have killed me. I dare not stay. And for what? What had I done? But I reach the sea with Marie, and we cross, and at last crawl here lest we should die of hunger; and you treat us—ah, mon Dieu!"

He kissed the tips of his fingers as he softly went back to his chair; and leaned back, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed like a child.

"I am weak—very weak," he said, deprecatingly, as he raised his eyes at last, and looked from one to the other; "but you unman me with your kindness. I came to you in despair, without clothes—without a home—without a sou. I came to ask for bread, and a place to lay our weary heads for a few hours. And what do you? You slay me—you crush me down with your kindness. I can never be grateful enough."

"Oh, nonsense—don't say any more about it," said Sir Richard, in a rough, half embarrassed fashion—for this was a sort of thing he could not

stand, so he afterwards said to his lady when they were alone. "You managed to escape, though," he said, to change the conversation.

"Escape? Ma foi! yes, it is so, or I should not be here."

"Then you were not set free?" said Lady Lawler, in a husky voice.

"Set free!" exclaimed Rivière, with flashing eyes. "They would have kept me till I died—died of rage and misery—till I beat my breast bare, like a bird in a cage. Ah!" he cried, with a peculiarly expressive gesticulation, as of one trying to press back something he did not wish to see—"ah! but it was frightful. But I will tell you—it is just that you should know;" and by degrees he laid before them the history of his escape.

"I may smoke? Yes? Thanks. I can do so much better when I have the little cigarette. Yes, it is soothing—it is a luxury from which I have been shut so long, that it makes me glad."

He smoked for awhile in silence, sending tiny rings of vapour floating upwards. Then, turning to Lady Lawler—

"She sleeps, then? My Marie? She is at rest? Ah, it is good. She is worn out, poor child. Let her sleep, for she can be at peace now that I am free.

"Free! Yes, out of prison at last! Cursed prison!—wherein I ate my heart!"

He groaned out these last words between his teeth, his face corrugating from brow to chin; and then he made as if he would have spat upon the floor; but, recollecting himself, he glanced at the lady present, and refrained.

"But you shall hear how I escaped," he said more cheerfully, assuming a lighter tone as he addressed himself more particularly to Lady Lawler. "I was changed from prison to prison, time after time. And for what? You know—you believe, I am sure—that I was innocent as a child. I would not have injured an infant. I—I—to think that I would use such intellect as the bon Dieu gave me to invent engines to destroy my fellow-creatures—that poor King! Bah! I envy him not his crown—his throne. Let him reign. I know nothing of their schemes—their revolutionary ideas.

"Yes, I was changed from prison to prison, till hope grew almost dead within me. Ah, but it was pitiful to pass those long, weary days, each black and hopeless as night, melting into those long, sleepless nights, which slowly, slowly crept on till it was day once more!

"Hope grew dead, and there seemed nothing for me but to lie down and die as well; only the spirit was too strong within me. I should have died—miladi forgives all these details?—yes, I should have lain down to die, but for a strong passion roused within me by my fellow-prisoner.

"Poor Pierre—he was one of the conspirators. He was guilty, but I believe unavoidably; and from him I learned who was my denouncer—the man whom I had made my friend for years. Heavens! that there should be such villainy upon earth! He was covetous—he hated me; and the time came for getting me away. He was successful. I was cast into prison, and while there I learned that which engendered a horrible suspicion—one that came through

my brain like a flash of light; but it made me live.

"Sir Richard, can you feel—you—what it must be to be caged within stone walls, believing that the wife you have loved with your whole heart has plotted with a villain to your destruction?"

"No," said Sir Richard, hoarsely, as he glanced from one to the other—for Rivière had paused to hear his reply.

"I," exclaimed Rivière, excitedly, as he smote himself upon the breast—"I lay there with that hideous thought. And I loved Marie so," he cried, piteously—"my sweet, gentle, tender-hearted wife! And at times I fought against the cruel thought till it almost maddened me.

"But it made me act," he cried—"it made me strive for freedom, that I might learn the truth. It was, though, a strange time: to-day I was weakly bemoaning my fate, the next I was furious. Ah, yes, madame—miladi weeps. She has pity for me; but she should turn from me with scorn when I tell of the times when I was mad with my evil thoughts, and cursed poor

Marie again and again, without waiting to see whether my fancies were right.

"It urged me on, though, this madness; and, with my fellow-captive, I tried to devise some plan for escaping. Ah! mon Dieu! what horrid thoughts were mine in those days!

"Pierre aided me, though at times he seemed as if he would sit down and bear his fate—imprisonment for life; but he, too, worked hard to find some means.

"And the days went by, he—Pierre—reckoning them with scraps of straw, till the bag he placed them in grew big; and I trembled lest despair should make me so mad that I should never think again. And still we thought. Should we dig out the mortar and move the stones? The mortar was harder than the cruel stones themselves. Should we loosen the bars of our window, and take one out? Ma foi! there was always a pig of a sentry there, to take delight in bruising our fingers with his gun. Once the dog pinned my hand to the wall with his bayonet. See!"

He held out a thin, soft palm, to show a scar

in the centre. Then, snatching it back as he saw his hostess shudder—

"But I am stupid," he said. "I have been so long away that I forget even the part of a gentleman. Miladi will forgive?"

He continued:

"Pierre said that we should raise one flag of the prison floor, and dig our way out beyond the prison walls. We were not rats. We had no machinery to lift the flag, and despair came over us there.

"What should we do? We could perhaps have slain our gaoler, and so made our way through the passages. I say perhaps, for at times came with him two soldiers; and had we had such a design, bah! Pierre and Louis Rivière would have been the slain.

"But," he went on, laughing, "we should not have done that. Life bought by life would have been dearly purchased. It was but a passing thought: we should have died sooner than try to shed blood, for we were both miserable cowards. Did we even kill the mice—the spiders? No. We even made pets of and

welcomed the flies, like other men who have been in prison.

"Ah!" he cried, after a pause, "how I used to awaken night after night—at one time, from a dream that I was free; at another, from a hideous vision wherein I had been slaying the fiend who had robbed me of my life.

"But then I frighten you," he said, with a look of gentle appeal upon his countenance. "I shock miladi. She will indeed think me a madman. Enough. We tried everything, but there was no escape—we were shut in too close; and I tell you that I was dying—dying fast. The spirit was wearing out the flesh, and soon all would have been at an end, when there came a change."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW TO ESCAPE.

"IT was like this," said Rivière, after a pause. "We had lain down upon our straw beds one night. We were worn out with our task.

"What had we been doing? Ma foi! we had worked, as in a fierce, hot rage, to loosen a stone in the cell wall—to loosen it, when it was like a rock. But we worked on all the same, one at each joint, picking out tiny scraps of the cement, and grinding them up in our teeth, so that we could smear the white paste upon the wall, where it dried, and did not betray us.

"We used to laugh bitterly as we ground the scraps, and say that it whitened the teeth. Even we, weary prisoners that we were, could have our laugh. But it did not whiten our fingers. Miladi, I horrify you when I tell you, but I must say all. It is a relief, and you will see what I have suffered. Our fingers bled as we worked, and then we had to stay, for it was more than we could bear.

"We lay one night on our beds thinking. Would the gaoler ever forget to fasten our cell—say in a year—two years—ten years? He might forget; and, if so, would it not be best to wait? Pierre asked me this in a whisper.

"'But he might not forget,' I answered, and Pierre was silent.

"'Could we bribe him?' he said after a while.

"'He would not trust us,' I said, bitterly, for I was loath to hurt the poor fellow's feelings. You see, Sir Richard, our fingers were bleeding, like our hearts, and we were full of sadness just then.

"'Louis,' said Pierre at last, 'why should we

work? We may loosen the stone. Good. What then?'

"I did not answer, but lay still, trying to stifle a groan.

"'What then?' he said once more. 'I will tell you, my friend. The inspector will see that it is loose, and we shall be placed in separate cells.'

"I knew that he was right; but, all the time, I felt that we must do it—go on toiling, to keep down the raging energy within us.

"Well, as I said, we had lain down; we had talked; we had made fresh plans, and they had fallen—pouf! like a house of cards. At last a dreamy sense of rest came over me—slowly—slowly, and I dozed off; but only to waken again with a start. Something had moved within the cell!

"I listened. Not a sound, only the breathing of Pierre, and a few muttered words which I could not understand.

"I lay down again, to remain wakeful for a time, but only for the dreamy sense of restfulness to come upon me again; and I slept once more. But again I woke with a start.

"No, nothing to alarm. Pierre was sleeping still; but I had a feeling that an enemy was near—was in the cell; and that, if I slept, he would attack me.

"I glided out of the bed, and in the darkness felt slowly all round the wall, listening again and again whether any one was trying to escape from me as I followed the cold, dank wall, my fingers searching in the corners.

"Then I tried round the other way, stooping down, and crossing and recrossing the floor, lest any one should be there.

"A dozen times I expected to touch some face, and to be locked in a fierce struggle; but no, all was still; and at last I stood by Pierre's bed, listening.

"All still—not a sound; and I told myself that it was fancy, and went once more to lie down.

"For a while no sleep would come, and I lay tossing from side to side. Then I tried to cool my burning fingers against the stone wall. Then the sense of danger—of a hidden enemy—came to make me shudder again.

"But now I fought against it with all my will, and conquered. I knew that no one could be there, and called myself a fool—a coward. 'The good God will protect us,' I said; and I kneeled upon my bed, and prayed—first for Marie, then for my liberty, lastly for protection; and then, no sooner had my head touched the hard pillow than I slept.

"How long I had slept I cannot tell; but I was awakened by a sensation as of a hand clutching my throat.

"'There was, then, some one here,' I remember feeling; and, in my half confused state, I put up both hands to seize my aggressor.

"No hands to touch!—no one to grasp! Mon Dieu! what was it? I could hardly breathe. What was this stifling feeling? Was I ill? Was this a new madness, come from overwrought fancy? No, it must be—Ciel! what? There was a dull red glow—not morning—not sunshine. No sun ever gladdened our cell. But there was the red glow shining in through the bars. And what was that noise?

"Yes, voices—and cries for help!

"Then, shaking off a horrible stupor that oppressed me, I began to comprehend that there were greater horrors than we had suffered yet. I was listening to the tramp of feet—the shouts of ordering officers; and below all, like a deep bass, a solemn, hurrying roar.

"Another second or two, and sense had asserted itself. I was awake—thoroughly awake; and, leaning over Pierre—sleeping deeply, his breath coming in gasps—I shook him fiercely, as I cried—

"'Up—up! or we shall be burned to death!'"

CHAPTER XII.

STRUGGLES FOR FREEDOM.

OUIS RIVIERE paused to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, as he gazed from one to the other of his listeners. Excited by his narrative, he had gesticulated even to acting his part in the scene he described—rising from his seat, and now taking a step in this direction, now in that;

seeming at times to forget that he was not alone.

"Ah!" he continued, "it was a wild time. Pierre leaped from his bed, and stood at my side in an instant, and as we fully awoke to our position, we stood there gazing as it were into the face of death—death in its most horrible form. There seemed to be no escape. Shut in there, and perhaps forgotten, we felt that we should not exist for many minutes longer, for already the air was growing hotter and more stifling.

"'Is there no escape?' Pierre whispered, with his lips close to my ear.

"I did not answer, for I could see nothing—nothing but what seemed to me like a black shade standing against the red glow shed by the flames.

"I felt that our time was come, but it did not seem so horrible then; for, forgetting the thirst for freedom that had been upon me so long, I asked myself what I had to live for. A word from Pierre aroused me, though, and the strong yearning came back.

"I rushed to the window, and leaped up to

the bars, caught them with my hands and clung there, shaking at them fiercely, and shouting for help.

"I shouted again, more and more loudly—my voice now husky, now shrilling into a scream; for there was no sentry now to strike at my fingers and force me to loose my hold.

"No one came. The roar outside increased, and the reflected light grew brighter. Now and again, too, a fierce flash of flame darted by, as if chasing scores of tiny flying sparks. Then more flames, battling with a very legion of sparks, that seemed to fight with them again, as they darted round and round, in a very whirlwind of ruddy, gold-hued scintillations. Worse and worse—hotter and hotter—flakes, tongues, a very storm of fiery masses flew by the bars, blistering my flesh as I still clung there shrieking for aid.

"But no help came. Our cries seemed to be hurled back red-hot in our teeth; and at last, blinded, suffocating, fighting fiercely for every breath of poisoned air we drew, we struggled back to the door.

"It all seems like a dream now, but it was

very real. As we reached the door we struck at it with all our little remaining force; dragging at it, and shrieking to the inhuman gaolers who had left us to our fate.

"It could not be far off, that we felt; for already snaky tongues of fire were darting and twining about the bars, licking them one by one, till, as the bright flames passed over them, it seemed to be to leave them red-hot. Then came hot puffs of smoke, seeming to be shot in—not wreathing and stealing in, but shot in, as from the mouth of some gun.

"We saw all this with a dreadful distinctness, and, glaring at each other, we seemed to read the thoughts that passed—horrible thoughts!—about what would burning be like? should we suffer much? or would the smoke and heat mercifully give an insensibility to pain?

"'Try—try once more,' cried Pierre, hoarsely.

"He need not have spoken, for I was already dragging savagely at the door, but without moving it; and then I sank down, to see Pierre stagger for a moment, and then fall by my side.

"'It cannot be long now,' I thought, and a

thousand old memories began to crowd my brain. But I forced them back, to make way for a thought of life. It was not time yet to die; and placing my face close to the crack at the bottom of the door, I breathed in one long, deep, refreshing draught of cool air.

"That gave me life to point it out to Pierre, who crawled to it and breathed. I placed my face there once more, and drew in hard the breath of life. That breath had thought upon its wings—a bright flash which told me that, though I had battered the door, I had never tried to raise the latch.

"In an instant I had seized it, just as the flames came roaring at the bars of the window.

"The door yielded, and moved widely open. The gaolers had not forgotten us, after all. There was for a moment a gush of pure air, and I fell down panting in the passage, where my breath soon grew less laboured, my temples ceased throbbing, and recollection grew brighter.

"I thought of Pierre. Where was he? He must be lying behind the door.

"I hesitated but for a moment or two to

gather breath, and then rushed back into the frightful heat; and there, in the fierce glow, lay poor Pierre.

"I was but just in time; for, as I seized him by one hand and dragged him out, the flames rushed in through the bars, and seemed to chase us out right into the stone corridor, till I had drawn him some distance away.

"The air was hot here; but it revived him. Close to the flags it was free from smoke. His eyes opened, and he struggled to his feet; and then, gaining fresh strength each moment, we ran down passage after passage, up stone steps and down again, seeking an exit, till we stood at a grating, through which rushed into the prison a stream of cold air that was like new life.

"We learned, as we hurried along by the open doors of the cells, that at the first alarm the gaolers must have slipped back the bolts; and soon after, from the murmur of voices outside, and the clinking of accoutrements, it seemed to us that as the prisoners rushed out of the burning place they were seized, perhaps chained, by

the soldiery, to keep them from getting right away.

"We could still hear the crackle and roar of the flames, still see the bright glow; but a fresh, pure breeze rushed in where we stood, recovering us so that in a short time we were hurriedly whispering together; for the same idea had struck us both—now was the opportunity for making our escape.

"As far as we could judge, the portion of the building on our right was burning furiously, while that upon our left was as yet untouched. Over all the roar of flames, and crackle and crash of burning and falling timber, came the shouts and confused voices of the spectators. Our hearts beat high as we listened, and asked ourselves whether that confusion might not be utilized to our purpose, and aid our evasion. If so, the fire was a blessing in disguise, and our narrow escape but a taste of a bitter cup that should afterwards brim over with joy.

"Joy! No, not for me; but I would be free.

"We consulted for a few moments, and then cautiously crept along a passage, one of the maze of corridors in the huge building.

"Empty cells one after the other, and all with grated windows. No escape through either of them, though we ran hastily into each in the hope of finding one whose window might be free from grating; but there was no egress there, and at last we stood at the end of the passage, to find that it was a mere cul de sac.

"We tried another, with the same result—then another—all leading away from the direction of the fire; but, in our ignorance of the building, we could find no exit there.

"'We must try towards the fire,' said Pierre, hurriedly.

"'But the people will be there,' I said; 'and besides, there will be the light—we should be seen directly.'

"'Never mind—we must try,' he said.

"We crept hastily along, then, in the new direction—to be stopped before we had gone twenty yards by a deafening crash overhead; and the end of a beam, one mass of golden

fire, came through the passage ceiling, and smoked and sparkled in our way.

"Running back, we tried another passage. Yes, here seemed to be a prospect, and if our object had merely been to get out of the building, it would have been achieved; but that was not all—we wanted freedom; and before we had gone far we were arrested by the sound of voices.

"No, there was no escape that way; and, like rats, we were driven back into the burning building, to try another way, this time upon an upper floor. But here we were met at once by a rush of heated air and smoke. It would have been suffocation to have stayed there a minute, so we descended.

"It was now my turn to advise; so I suggested the lowest floor of the building, as we stood at the head of a flight of stone steps, evidently leading to the subterranean cells.

"There might be some way out there, I thought; but ten minutes' wandering in the obscurity, guiding ourselves by the damp walls, had no further result than to bring us up where

a dull glow shone through a grating overhead.

"'Could we stay down here till the fire is over,' said Pierre, 'and try afterwards to escape from the ruins?'

"'Where to?—to Heaven?' I said, bitterly; and I pointed to where, dimly seen in the glow from the grating, was what seemed to be a soft wave of grey smoke slowly coming towards us; and in another instant it had driven us back with its stinging, blinding fumes. 'Why, man, even if we could live through that, the place will be a red-hot oven of stones before many hours are passed. Let us try again.'

"We ascended to the level once more, and tried quite a fresh passage; and on turning an angle, there, in the ruddy glow of the fire, we saw the entrance, but before it every moment passed soldiers and gaolers, conveying buckets of water.

"A bold rush might, we thought, give us our freedom; but we would not risk it yet, without trying one or two more passages. We tried them, but without result; and at last we stood

almost in a state of panic, for the dread of death was seizing us again, and for a time we almost set aside the thought of freedom, as the desire for safety asserted itself.

"It was no wonder, for in all directions the fire seemed spreading, and hemming us in. Passages that we had before explored were now closed to us by the flame or smoke; and as we stood there, gazing in each other's scorched and blackened faces, it was to read one's own feelings in the flaming eyes.

"But, my friends, it seems to me that our fears, our hopes, our joys, come to us in waves that flood us for the time, and then pass over. Now it is pleasure that comes to us, now sorrow or pain. We suffer it for the time, and then it is gone. Our panic, then—our dread of death, and its urgings to run for safety, soon passed away, and the desire for freedom came once more. We recollected now enough of the great place to be able to find the passage where we had looked out at the gaolers and soldiers with the buckets; and soon we stood there, to find it just the same, only with a brighter light.

"And now, as we stood there watching and listening, we felt how great an excuse we had for our late fear: the noise was now deafening; timbers, walls were falling, and after each crash there was a fiercer roar of the flames; and hurricanes of sparks and golden flakes rushed by, through which the figures at the end of the passage seemed to flit like so many demons.

"Yes, it was now our only hope—a bold rush. We had tried in every direction; and if we stayed longer, it must be to fall victims to the fire, which was increasing every moment. We only waited to see if the confusion would be greater, though from where we stood it was little we could judge."

CHAPTER XIII.

A RACE.

"I DO not think it was more than a minute or two, but it seemed hours, that we stood there screened by the angle of the passage, and waited for an opportunity; till in despair I said to Pierre—

"'Opportunities will not come. We must go. Mind, mon ami, it is for freedom as well as for life.'

"We were Frenchmen—compatriots in misfortune—and as we stood there for a brief moment, we embraced; then, standing motionless to nerve ourselves for the struggle, I cried—

"'Now!'

"I remember that we had taken in our peril at a glance; that we knew we were only about to run into a walled yard that was light as day, and full of people, all inimical to our safety. But what then? Gates must be open at such a time—there would be a crowd and confusion. Could we not mix with the crowd, and escape in the confusion?

"I remember, too, wishing that we had buckets, so as to appear to be busy with the rest; but the wish was vain, and I gave the signal in what I know was almost a yell, and then we ran.

"It seemed as though we darted from the shadow at one stride into the glare of light in the yard, though we had far to go down the passage. The heat scorched us as we ran, and it was not till then that I realized how great a risk we had run in staying so long within the burning building.

"As we passed into the light we were seen, and greeted with a ringing cheer by those who saw us—a welcome to two men who

seemed, to their eyes, like spirits from the dead.

"A dozen ran forward to meet us, evidently with friendly intent; but, as we darted out and ran on, they divined our aim, shouted to us to stop, and the old savage spirit of man's nature rose within them: here was something to hunt down. They were tired of battling with the flames, and they turned to the fresh excitement offered by two prisoners trying to escape.

"It was an exciting scene that: the bright light turning everything, as it were, into gold, save where dense black shadows were cast; the hurrying figures, the motionless crowd of lookers-on, and—most exciting to us—the forms of those who had taken up the pursuit of the two fugitives racing for their liberty.

"We had no idea of locality; but, without a moment's pause, dashed across the yard for where we saw a black opening in the high wall.

"Before we had gone twenty yards, two soldiers seemed to start from the ground right in our way.

"'Stop!' they cried.

"But they were armed only with buckets.

"As well might they have cried 'Stop!' to the furious typhoon. Before the word was well uttered, Pierre had bounded at his stayer, and, without blow or seeming effort, the soldier was on the pavement. Pierre had simply run him down.

"As for my man who barred my way, what will you? I cannot tell how it was, only that I felt something and heard a heavy fall, and the noise of the bucket rolling over and over upon the stones. They had not stayed us in the least; they had simply stood in our way, when we had redoubled our force and passed over them: that was all.

"There was another shout, and we saw a crowd in front; but just as we were about to double and turn away, they set up a cheer, and parted right and left for us to pass. They were fellow-prisoners, and their movement forced back their guards, so that we were clear; but crack!—crack!—crack!—there were shots fired at us as we dashed on; and again a soldier stood in front

of us as we ran through a second yard, where the lower part was in darkness.

"This man presented a bayonet at us; but with a bound Pierre avoided it, and in a moment had the poor devil in his hug, while I wrested the gun from his hands, and brought down the butt upon his head.

"Poor fellow! he went down like an ox; but he was only stunned, for I did not try to slay. And what would you? Were we not trying for life and freedom?

"There were more shots and shouts behind, but they only seemed to spur us on; and, fortunately for us, the noise and crashing of the falling walls, as they were undermined by the flames, half drowned the tumult raised by our escape.

"We crossed now another yard, with open garden-work about; and in front, lit by the fire, was a great gate, with turrets at the side. There was a soldier here, too, looking towards us and our pursuers.

"He was evidently thinking everything connected with the fire; for had he imagined we

were trying to escape, he would have closed the great gates, lately opened for the passage of the engines.

"'Stand back!' shouted Pierre, waving his hands to the man—'more water!—water!—quick!'

"The sentry, accustomed to obey orders, stepped back mechanically, and in a few seconds we should have been free without further struggle; but there were ominous shouts of 'Stop! stop!' behind us; and the man recovered from his surprise, and tried to arrest us.

"He was too late. We went at him with all the impulse of our run, and, forgetting his bayonet and musket, sent him rolling over and over, and bounded on.

"There were plenty of black shadows here under the walls of this new courtyard, for there was yet another enclosure before we could be free; and running panting on, we avoided for a time the men who were now hot upon our track. We hoped that they would give up the pursuit, and return to the fire; but no, they pressed on;

and as we ran, making now a circuit of the great prison boundary, we heard them still shouting, though they had not gained upon us a yard.

"All this time our eyes were directed to the left, where we saw an open gate; once through which, there would be liberty for us, if we were not stayed by the gathering spectators outside.

"If we had only known our way, we could have been free in half the time; but we had had to run blindly, more than once nearly dashing into the very danger we wished to avoid.

"And now, in our despair, panting, our breath coming with a hoarse, tearing noise, we were compelled to double right out into the open space, and make for the farther wall—the last.

"We had so far been partially protected by the darkness; but now we were plainly seen, and a series of shouts followed us, wherein we could plainly hear the word 'Surrender!'

"'When I am dead,' I heard Pierre cry, hoarsely; and still on we ran, striving to reach the gateway. At last we neared it—quite a small aperture in the wall, and open, for the

catastrophe had pretty well upset all discipline. If we could but gain it! But we were running over soft land—the garden ground of the great prison—and each moment we grew more exhausted.

"Could we reach it?

"Another frantic effort, and we were there, seeming to chase our shadows thrown before us by the burning building. No warder or guard was in our way, and with a bound we were through, uttering a yell of derision at our pursuers—for right in front of us was now freedom in the form of an open space, beyond which seemed to be a great bank of darkness; and if we could once reach that, we knew we should be safe—at all events, for the time.

"Still the shouts and cries; but not a soul in front—every one was at the fire. The pace was very slow now, for we were all pretty well exhausted, pursuers and pursued; but there was still that cursed light showing our every movement to our enemies; and to be taken now, now that we were free, was too much!

"'For life and freedom, Pierre,' I said,

huskily, keeping step with him in our heavy trot.

"'Yes, mon ami—for freedom,' he cried; and we toiled on.

"Had a single man now appeared in our way, we must have surrendered without an effort; but there was none. The dark wood, too, in front was coming nearer and nearer, and we still panted on and on, till, with a feeble 'Viva!' I reached out a hand to Pierre, and, grasping his, we ran on hand in hand—for the curs had ceased behind: our pursuers had stopped.

"Another moment, and we should reach the wood, when the cause of the halt reached us in the shape of the ringing noise of a volley of musketry.

"I felt a sharp, stinging pain, and then, giving a leap forward, fell upon my face."

CHAPTER XIV.

"MORT!"

LOUIS RIVIERE stood looking from one to the other of his auditors for a few moments, nursing one arm in his hand; and then, letting it fall, he pointed to it, saying—

"Ah, bah! but it was not much—the pain was not so very great—a bone broken, that was all.

"It did not arrest me for long. I was up again and running directly, by the side of Pierre

—running hard once more to get out of the hateful glare of light which showed all our movements to the enemy, who now revenged themselves for their failure by firing after us again and again.

"The firing was but in vain: they might have spared their powder and shot, for in a few minutes the friendly darkness had opened to us its arms. The glare of light was far behind, and we were running gently down a lane which led us out towards fields and between vineyards. Looking back, as we stood to listen for pursuit, there was but the reflection against the sky sent up by the cursed cage where we had lain for so long, gnawing our hearts; and now it seemed to be all like a dream—it could not be true!

"But I fatigue you with my long recital," said Rivière, looking at Lady Lawler.

"No, no; pray go on!" she exclaimed eagerly.

Rivière bowed, and went on with his narrative.

"We were past running now, and kept on at a rapid walk, which took us over the ground

pretty well; and I was beginning to consider which direction we should take. I was panting still with my late exertions; but I did not mind, for every breath was that of the free, pure air, which blew fully in my face, and seemed to cool my throbbing temples. I felt tired, but the spirit was in me to run on for ever—anywhere sooner than be captured.

"'Let us get on faster,' I cried at last, excitedly, for Pierre had tramped on at my side without speaking for some little time—'let us get on faster, for morning will soon be here.'

"As I spoke, I ran on for a few yards to set him an example, and urge him to fresh exertion; for during the last ten minutes it had seemed that he had grown sluggish in his movements.

"Ah, how I misjudged the poor lad! Suddenly stopping short, he uttered a strange, wild cry.

"I was at his side in an instant.

"'What is it?' I cried, trembling in every limb; for I seemed to know what was wrong.

"Quick, help me!' he exclaimed. 'I was hit

when they fired first. Lay me under that hedge.'

"A hand seemed to compress my heart as I softly bore him to the turf by the roadside, and there kneeled down with his heavy head resting upon my arm.

"I don't know how long it was that I knelt there, stunned and helpless. I would have gone for aid, but he always stayed me with a whisper.

"'It is getting dark,' he said, softly, 'and I feel now as a little child. I fear the darkness—do not leave me!'

"Mon Dieu! How my poor heart seemed to swell, as with one great sob that would not escape—another prisoner—but I—I would have set it free.

"I cannot tell how long I was, I say, stunned. I was bleeding, I knew; but what of that? I knew now how I loved my companion, the friend who had been with me in all my trouble. And he was dying!

"Yes, dying; for in a few minutes he turned more towards me, his head resting more upon

my breast, as when one settles down for a sweet sleep.

"I knew it was at hand then; for he whispered —very faintly—

"'Go now—lay my head softly down; escape for your life. Ah, mon Dieu!'

"I laid his poor head down as he had told me, and then knelt in the darkness, looking down upon his poor inanimate face; for he had passed away, and the heavy tears were raining down upon the eyes that would never look upon me again. The dogs had murdered him—my poor friend was no more."

CHAPTER XV.

HOME.

"I WAS too much stunned at first to believe it. I could not think that our fortune could have forsaken us in this way; and for a while I knelt there speaking to him, calling him louder by name, and in a childish state of wonderment asking myself why he did not speak. Then I wondered whether I, too, were badly hit; and I half wished that I might lie down by his side and sleep.

"You must not think ill of me and my ways, miladi; for think how I was broken in spirit with my long imprisonment, and even worn out with my efforts to escape. And besides—look

at this—after our long chase and struggle for life, now that escape seemed almost certain, here was my poor friend stricken down.

"It is perhaps singular, but hating him at first, I had grown to love Pierre as a brother; and now, mon Dieu! he was dead.

"I laid his head down, as I told you, with the first tears I had shed for months raining down upon his poor face. What will you? It was childish! I could not bring him back to life? True, but I am a Frenchman, and I come of a great nation. We are not like you English. We are easily turned to hate, to love, to revenge. We feel and think strongly. It is our climate—our sun. You—you English, are in a land of spleen and fogs, and cannot feel as we do.

"But stay! Oh, mon ami—look, miladi is moved by my story. She pities poor Pierre. She faints."

Sir Richard was at her side, with Rivière, in an instant, frowning at the little Frenchman's anxiously proffered aid, which he mentally called officious. Lady Lawler, however, recovered herself after a brief struggle.

"No, no," she exclaimed, "it is nothing. I —I am rather weak. Give me a glass of wine, Dick."

"Dick" frowned a little more deeply at being addressed in this familiar way before a stranger, and, before obeying, somewhat roughly raised his lady higher in her chair, from which she seemed to be gliding a moment or two before.

"That will do," she said, peevishly; and Sir Richard looked very grave as he poured out the required glass of wine, which was drunk with an accompanying sigh of satisfaction.

"You can sit down—I am better now," said Lady Lawler, imperiously.

"Hadn't you better go up to bed?" said Sir Richard. "Monsieur Rivière will finish his story another night—or morning," he added, with a glance at the clock.

"Oh, oui, yes—when miladi wishes," said Rivière, eagerly.

"I am better now," said Lady Lawler, quietly.

"Yes, Addy; but it is very—"

"Yes, yes—I know," she said, pettishly. "And you are keeping Monsieur Rivière waiting. Go on, Monsieur Rivière, please, I want to hear the rest."

"But it is too much—my recital is so full of horrors. I shock you," protested Rivière, with outstretched hands.

"Go on, Monsieur Rivière, if you please," said Lady Lawler, firmly.

Sir Richard drew in a long breath, wrinkled his forehead and tightened his lips, as he rose once more, walked across to a cabinet, took out a cigar, whose end he bit off viciously, and then began to smoke, sending the vapour forth in short, angry puffs, as his visitor continued:—

"Yes, I kneeled there a long time, and then, in a half-dreamy way, I rose, and laid my handkerchief over poor Pierre's face. There was not a breath of air to lift a corner as I tottered and stumbled away along the road, until broad daylight—moving now as if I were some machine working without thought, and merely going forward in the one same direction. At last,

though, thought seemed to come back, and the stunned feeling to depart; for I was each moment growing more faint. There was a wood before, and into that I crawled, pushing back the brambles and bushes I displaced in entering; and then, on and on I went, forcing my way, where every twig seemed an enemy trying to trip me up, till at last one stronger than the rest caught my foot, and I gave a groan and fell, too helpless to rise again.

"I suppose I must have fallen into a stupor-like sleep, which lasted many weary hours. Nature, overwrought as she was, needed rest; and darkness had set in before I once more unclosed my eyes.

"It was now to awake to a sense of agonizing hunger, which I could not appease, for it took me long to get out of the wood. I came at last, though, to an opening where a farmer had planted the ground with roots, and of these I ate to stay the famishing pain.

"But there, it is so late, I will not weary you with my long, long journey to Paris; let me only tell you that I was obliged to walk

by night, and it was many, many journeys before I stood at last before my own house, not daring at first to enter.

"You will say, why did I not dare? I will tell you. I was thirsting for revenge. I believed all evil of Marie, and that fiend, Lemaire; and yet, now the time was come, I feared to go and assuage that thirst; for, strong as was my hate, mon Dieu, how I loved poor Marie! Then, too, I dreaded to throw away my liberty. Was it known here that I had escaped? Surely. The news would be sent, and the police would be on the look-out for me. 'Ma foi!' they would say, 'the bird is sure to come back to its nest, and we will await him there.'

"Can you think what it was to me to go and lurk by day in vile courts and alleys, and then steal by night to stand opposite my own window, and watch the light upon the curtain, not daring to enter, afraid to let Marie know that I was there? I had written to her, but she made no sign. I had said, 'Hang a black glove in the window if there is danger, and a white one if I may come.'

But she made no sign; and I gnawed my lips in my impotent rage.

"'She, too, is really against me,' I said. 'I was holding one hope to my heart, but it has gone for ever, and now—'

"My hands clenched with the rage within me, till the long nails entered my flesh; and I went back to the house one night and watched to see Lemaire enter; but he did not come.

"I watched another night, and he did not come. Again another night, and he did not come; and then I tore my hair.

"'Fool!' I shrieked to myself, 'he is there—he lives there; and the shadow you have seen pass the window is his.'

"I glided by the concièrge, and went softly up the stairs, past the familiar entries of dear neighbours; but I felt then that they were all my enemies, and, with the wrath of a demon in me, I reached our own floor, thrust open the door, and entered.

"There were two seated on a couch; and as I darted at them, open-handed, the woman shrieked and the man started away.

"I stood transfixed. The mad rage seemed to ooze from me, and I could have embraced them both. They were strangers. I had been away for long, and Marie had left the house.

"They thought me mad; so I made what excuses I could, and turned away. I ran down the stairs, and asked in a feigned voice for Madame Rivière's address. It was a few streets off, where there were humble lodgings; and there I ran.

"Should I watch again? 'No,' I said, 'I will end the torture. Perchance I am wrong—she may not have had my letters. Stay!'

"I ran back to the concièrge of the old house.

"'Any letters for Madame Rivière?'

"They gave me my own, and my heart bounded within me, as I hurried back. Through some carelessness the letters had neither been forwarded nor returned. I forgot that the concièrge might have recognized me, and that I might be retaken.

"Ah! I sigh even now with contentment, and still I tear my heart to think I could be such a villain as to doubt; for upon reaching my home

—yes, my home—it was to fall on my knees before poor Marie, whom I had wronged indeed.

"But I had not wronged that villain, Lemaire, who had persecuted the poor child till she had had to meditate flight. He had been there, with subterfuge and trick; and lastly, finding that cajoling had no effect, he had stooped to threats; and matters had gone so far that in another day my poor child would have left Paris, and I should have lost her, for she would not have dared to leave her address.

"How could I doubt her—my sweet—my love! As she lay her head on my arm, and looked up at me with her soft, gentle eyes, she little knew how she was punishing me for my cruel thoughts. But still, see what I had suffered! Ma foi, I could not help it.

"I was sitting feasting upon her soft, pale face, when suddenly I saw it grow drawn, and white, and stony. It was as though death had stricken her; for her eyes grew wide and dilated, and her lips, blue and ghastly, stood apart.

"A great horror had come upon her, and I saw that she was gazing over my shoulder at some-

thing which seemed to fascinate her, so that she could neither move nor speak.

"I started round: it was to see Lemaire in the act of closing the door.

"With a cry of rage I bounded across the room, and throwing myself against the door, I hurled it open, and leaped down the stairs, half a dozen at the time. But I was too late. He was as fleet as I, and he had the start. When I reached the street he was gone, and I knew not which way to run in the dark.

"As I stood hesitating, a soft hand caught mine. Marie was at my side, whispering counsel. Her woman's wit had told her what to do—what must follow.

"'We must flee, my Louis," she whispered, hoarsely. 'There is not a moment to spare. He will denounce you to the police.'

"She was right; and for a while I stood paralyzed. For a chill of dread ran through my veins, as like a vision there rose before my giddy brain the cruel sufferings of the past. I should be cast once more into prison, and Marie would be exposed to the machinations of that monster.

"Bah! what is a man in time of trouble? Miladi, it is to your charming sex we owe so much. But for Marie, I should have been taken. She had darted upstairs, and returned in a minute equipped for our journey. She handed me a hat, a wrapper—garb that she had, like a true wife, kept ready for my return, her heart telling her that it would be some day in the future.

"The next moment we were in the street, she leading me past the wretched flickering lamps. Where did we mean to flee? Anywhere in the wide world, so that we were together.

"I was so stunned, so broken with all that I had passed through, so chilled with dread, that I had to trust to Marie; and she led me like a little child, guiding me across the rough way, and under the opposite houses.

"Fate seemed very cruel to us then; for before we had gone many steps Marie's quick ear detected danger, and she drew me back into a dark entry opposite her home, where we stood, hand clasped in hand, listening to coming footsteps.

"Yes, there was no doubt about it—we had unwittingly taken the way by which Lemaire would return; and he, villain that he was, had lost no time. So that as we stood there, we heard him approach with two sergents de ville, whom he was rating for their tardiness.

"'But I tell you,' he said, hoarsely, 'he will be gone.'

"'Bah! monsieur would have us fly. We shall trap our bird, never fear.'

"'How can he get away?' said the other. 'He is safe. Paris is too small a place for him to hide in without our finding his perch.'

"Lemaire said something impatiently that I could not catch, though they were opposite to us. Then they halted; and Lemaire stayed at the entrance, while the two sergents de ville went in.

"Marie pressed her other hand over my lips, and laid her head upon my shoulder, spreading herself before me, as if to shield me from evil. And it was well that she restrained me; though reason told me to stir would be madness, and must end in my capture.

"But it was a hard struggle, to stand there with my enemy—my cowardly persecutor—the man thirsting to do me the greatest wrong that man can do to man — with the fiend standing there, as it were, inviting me to dash across the road and strangle him where he stood.

"Marie must have divined my thoughts; for I felt her throw one arm round me, and hold me tighter and tighter to her breast. Then she softly took her hand from my mouth, to wreath it also round me, holding me more firmly, as her soft lips sought mine, and rested upon them in a long, clinging kiss.

"It was sealing my lips, indeed, so that I should utter no sound that should betray us to Lemaire, who stood impatiently waiting for the return of the sergents de ville.

"But a few minutes, at the outside, could have elapsed, but the space of time seemed an age. Now Lemaire took a step or two into the building, as if to speak to the porter; then he came out, fretting apparently with impatience. Then he seemed to be standing listening in-

tently; and for a moment my heart stood still, and I sought to free myself from Marie, who only clung to me with a spasmodic energy. For, suddenly, Lemaire, whom we could just make out by the glimmer of the nearest lamp, stepped out into the roadway, making apparently for the entry where we stood concealed. In fact, it seemed as if he saw us; for he was walking straight before him. I felt Marie tremble, and now her hold began to slacken as if to set me free for the coming struggle; her lips, too, quitted mine, and sought my ear to whisper—

"'Strike him down, and flee—England.'

"I drew a long breath. I was to hold him then, at last! How should I be able to quit the hold I had upon him when once we came in contact? Should I have revenge or liberty? These were the thoughts which crossed my brain, as I nerved myself, and he crossed the road.

"Heavens, what an escape! When it seemed certain that he saw us plainly, he suddenly faced round, and stood with his back to us, evidently

gazing up at the light burning in the room we had so lately left.

"He might have heard our hearts beat, with a heavy, low thud, thud, as he stood there; but he was too intent upon his task, and after muttering impatiently for a moment or two, he strode back. And this time we heard him speak to the concièrge.

"'Non, non, monsieur. No one has gone out since monsieur passed out last.'

"The woman must have been asleep to make such an assertion; but Lemaire was evidently satisfied, and he waited again, impatiently, till we could hear the heavy descending steps of the police. And again Marie shuddered, and clung more closely to me.

"'The room is empty, monsieur—the birds are flown.'

"'Did you search?'

"'Search? Yes. A cat could not hide in the room without being seen.'

"'He must be in the house,' said Lemaire. 'He has not passed out. Ask madame, there.'

"'Oh, non, non—nobody has passed out, mes-

sieurs may take my word for it,' said the woman, speaking fast. 'I should hear a cat come down the stairs; and I always listen—listen—listen all day long, almost all night; for it is my habitude, and I like to know when my people are in and out.'

"'You live alone?' said one of the sergents de ville.

"'My faith! yes—quite alone; and as I said to my friend—'

"'And have no one to talk to,' said the sergent who was speaking.

"'No—I have no one to talk to,' exclaimed the woman, trying hard to keep up her discourse; but the sergent would keep tripping her up, and now literally talked her back into her lodge, amongst her many keys, and shut her in.

"'Dame!' he said, 'why did women have tongues given to them?'

"'You must search the whole house,' said Lemaire, impatiently.

"'Ah, bah! monsieur—you require too much,' said the other sergent.

"'Too much!' cried Lemaire. 'Here is a

plotter against the King's life! He escapes from prison, and comes to his house. I denounce him, and show him to you—show you his hole, and you refuse to find him!'

"'Monsieur seems to like denouncing Louis Rivière. He got the poor devil a long sentence. Is he not satisfied?'

"'Mind I do not denounce you!' said Lemaire, sternly; and this silenced the sergent de ville. 'I order you to search that house, and to find the escaped prisoner. Refuse to do it, and I lay the case before your superiors.'

"'Ah, monsieur is angry. We do not refuse—oh, no, not at all. Come, Jules.'

"The men entered the place again, and Lemaire remained outside, watching intently; listening, too, as the sounds of altercation came down to the street, telling that the inhabitants of the different stages objected to this intrusion upon their privacy.

"The search took a long time, and never once did an opportunity offer for us to try and get away in the darkness. Lemaire was too close and would certainly have seen us. So we waited

on, till the sergents once more came down; and after an angry altercation with Lemaire, wherein they refused to stay and watch, and set him at defiance, departed for their bureau.

"'I'll stay and watch, if it is for a month,' I heard Lemaire mutter, as soon as he was alone. Then he stood listening, till the steps of the sergents passed away in the distance; and after gazing up at the lights of the house, he turned round once more, and seemed to catch sight of something in the dark entry where we stood, for he suddenly uttered a loud 'Ha!' and came hurriedly across to where I stood, before Marie now, waiting, and with every nerve and muscle in full tension for my spring.

"'At last!' I said, through my teeth; and on he came to his fate."

CHAPTER XVI.

RIVIERE ENDS HIS NARRATIVE.

AH, but it is not right that I should tell all this before miladi. Would she wish to hear?" said Rivière.

"Oh, yes—yes," exclaimed Lady Lawler, who was flushed and excited by the narrative.

"But it makes me in her eyes as a low brawler," said Rivière. "But what will you? It was no time then for waiting. I could not challenge the villain, and meet him like a gentleman, with

sword or pistol. Ah, no—the lâche would have had me arrested, and sent off to prison once more; so I met him as I could.

"Marie would have sprung between us when she saw that he knew of our being there, and came hurrying to see whether we were those he sought. Ah! if he had known, he would have called for help. But he did not, but rushed across with the eagerness of some beast that scents blood. And I—I threw into the blow I struck him, full in the face, all the hatred and bitterness of my injuries; and then, as he fell, striking his head heavily upon the pave, I was about to hurl myself with itching fingers at his throat. My nationality was asserting itself, and I should have been tearing him like my countrymen—like a brute beast—when a tender, gentle hand was laid upon my arm, and a sweet voice whispered—

"'Come!'

"Ma foi! I was a prisoner again—a captive to her gentle sway; and Marie led me away swiftly, before people came up—before there was danger for me. It was painful to have to

leave the cause of all my pain; but Marie said 'Come!' and it was enough. I went, and she hurried me through street after street in the darkness, till we were far away from where Lemaire lay prone. My hot, excited feelings, too, grew more calm, and soon we were away from danger—I a prisoner still to that tender, wifely love.

"That night we left Paris behind, trusting to the roads for protection, and avoiding everybody we could as we journeyed on and on to seek the coast, and from thence an asylum in some free land where we might be free—safe from the enemies who would, I knew, soon be on my track.

"But there, my friends, it is enough. I should weary you if I told you of all our troubles. Enough when I tell you that we tramped along the roads, light-hearted and happy in our reunion, cheerful in the pleasant sunshine, sad and low-spirited in the storm. We were beggars as we went along the road; but what mattered, so that we were together? I tell you that, could we have been free from

the dread of capture, our life there would have been bliss.

"Often and often we lay down trustfully beneath the pure, soft sky, with the purple grapes hanging in bunches over our heads, and the soft winds whispering through the lanes. We had no other covering than that of heaven; but the life was sweet, save when I was awakened from dreams of my prison, of the grating, and the dancing flames. But that was not often, and there was always Marie's voice to whisper to me of safety; and then I slept again, to be awakened by the sunshine and the sweet song of birds, light and refreshed. Then there would be water from some stream, and the loaf of bread we bought, upon which we feasted happily, thankfully, and journeyed on.

"But, mon ami, Sir Richard, this was, after all, most terrible to a delicate woman. I saw that it could not endure, and longed for the day when we could reach the sea-shore; for our journey was slow, and we went far out of our course, so as to baffle pursuers. If we had followed the regular route, I must have

been taken again and again; but going through simple villages, wandering through narrow lanes, our path lay clear. I longed now for the coast, and would have gone straight had we dared. Our object was to try and find some fisherman who would give us a passage across. We had little money; but Marie possessed a ring or two, which we thought would suffice. We had time to bring nothing else.

"At last we reached a fishing village in Normandy; and there, as we inhaled the salt, free breeze, and saw the little vessels floating upon the waves, my heart gladdened within me—but only to grow chill and heavy again, for the dread came upon me that our enemies might be here and waiting for us.

"But no; there was danger, perhaps, but we saw it not. I spoke with the fishers; and, after some demur, they agreed to bring us over, each for a ring; and at last, when we were dancing over the waves, with the coast line behind us growing more distant hour by hour, I felt that we were leaving home, but also danger, behind. Still, each sail we passed made me thrill lest

it should contain a pursuer; and again and again I thought that we were to be captured within sight of freedom. They were false fears, though, and we were landed at last in this free land—beggars, but in safety.

"We were safe, but now our sorrows seemed to be on the increase. Had we not known that there were no spies dogging our steps, we must have sunk from utter weariness. But we knew that we were free—free; that in this land the exile might find rest; and we toiled on to reach London—to seek the only people we knew—to ask for charity—for a piece of bread and for shelter, till we can find means to struggle with the world."

The narrative was at an end; and Sir Richard Lawler stood frowning as, with streaming eyes, his lady approached their guest, to lay her hand upon his arm, and say, in subdued tones, a few words that he could not catch. He could divine their meaning, though, as Rivière caught Lady Lawler's hand in both his own, and kissed it again and again,

his dark eyes flashing as he raised them to hers.

Then he turned to Sir Richard.

"But your dear lady is too good," he said, in husky tones. "She is an angel. I can never repay you."

Sir Richard muttered something that Rivière could not make out, and took out his watch.

"Yes, yes," cried Rivière, upon whom the action was not lost—"it is too late—I have detained you horribly. Let me tell you, though, again how grateful I am."

He took Lady Lawler's hand, and kissed it once more, accompanying her to the door, as she took up a chamber candlestick.

Directly after, he returned to Sir Richard, who was moodily lighting another candle, which he offered in silence to his guest, afterwards leading the way to the chamber set apart for the visitors' use.

"Good night, my dear friend," cried Rivière with effusion; and he tried to pass the candlestick over the shoulder of his host, that he

might embrace him as the custom is in France; but Sir Richard eluded the touch, held out his hand à la fin of cod, touched Rivière's lightly, said "Good night," and was gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

KITCHEN GOSSIP.

"TAKE another horn of ale, Mr. Higgs, and don't spare it. There's plenty more where this came from. Jane will be down as soon as the child is a-bed."

"Thanky, sir," said Abram Higgs, as he slowly raised the foaming vessel, and then wiped his mouth upon his sleeve after he had set the horn down empty upon the servants' hall table. After this he sat and stared heavily at Mr. Sellars, Sir Richard's butler, who, ruddy, portly, and wearing the white-neckclothed aspect of a bishop, refilled the visitor's horn.

"And how do you find thayatrical matters, Mr. Higgs?"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Higgs, slowly, after apparently looking inside himself to see what he should say, "take things altogether, they aint so very bad. We're closed just now for a touch at painting up and getting a new casting, and then we opens with a fresh piece."

"Tragedy or comedy, Mr. Higgs?" said the butler.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Higgs, "if I was to say as it was tragedy, I shouldn't be telling the truth; and if I was to say comedy, I shouldn't be telling what's right—for it aint neither one nor the other. It's one o' them fashionable sorter pieces that's all the go now, where it seems as if they'd taken a serus and a comic piece, and cut 'em up, and fitted 'em together to make one."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Sellars. "Take another horn of ale, Mr. Higgs. There's plenty more where that came from."

"Thank you, sir—you're very kind," said Higgs; and he took another horn, pouring it

slowly down his throat, as if sending it to keep the former horn company.

"Anything very spectarcular in the piece, Mr. Higgs?" said the butler, with the air of a connoisseur.

"Well, yes, sir, there's a few novelties. You see, people likes a little of the real in the things nowadays on the stage—fires, and engines, and railway trains, and real horses; so our manager has gone in for it very strong this time."

"Has he, though?" said the butler.

"Oh, yes, very," said Higgs, glancing at the door, as if expectant of a fresh face upon the scene; "oh, yes, sir, we do things well our way. We're to have a real flock of sheep driven across the stage in the prologue—that's done along of one of the New Cattle Market salesmen. Then we've a boy run over by a real 'bus, loaded with passengers, in the first act; a cab-stand all real, with a waterman and his pails, and a post with real water laid on, and all the horses with nose-bags a-tossing their heads and shying the chaff about in the second act, with swells coming out of the clubs and hiring their Hansoms."

"That ought to bring the house down, Mr. Higgs," said the butler, approvingly; "but I don't know what Shakspeare would have said to such an innovation."

"Why, you see, Mr. Sellars, sir," continued Higgs, "the drammar was in its hinfancy in Shakspeare's time, and the stage carpenter's profession hadn't arrived at such a climax, as you may say."

"Exactly," said the butler, nodding. "But about your new piece—what have you got next?"

"Well, I don't know as I ought to tell you, sir," said Higgs, slowly; "but seeing as we are all amongst friends, and you won't let it go any further, sir, I don't mind telling you that we've got a triumph, and the way I'm getting it ready for that third act will be a startler. There's never been nothing like it attempted before, and it'll be grand, sir."

"Ah, you may depend upon me, Mr. Higgs," said the butler, solemnly, as if he were being trusted with a State secret.

"Well, sir, the scene's to be Ludgate-hill by

night, with St. Paul's at the back, and you looking up the hill, with the street up, and the navvies all busy taking up the pipes, with the gas flaring to light it up all lurid. Then in comes the heroine, and says—

"'Thus far have I fled, and still he is upon my tract. I'll flee me here.'

"Then she flees herself there, and the navvies look up at her. Enter the villain, and he says, coming forward—

"'I've tracked her here, and now my revenge is nigh. Aha! behold my prey!'

"Then he makes a run along the piled-up earth, where the men are at work, and the navvies shout to him as it aint safe; when he cries, 'Aha! 'tis safe for me!' and then he makes a jump to get at the heroine, when she shrieks, and the villain slips, the earth caves in, and he's buried alive."

"Brayvo!" said Mr. Sellars, clapping his hands softly.

"But that aint all, sir," said Mr. Higgs. "There's the eppylog, which is as good as another act, you know; and in that we have a real

coroner's inquest in the back of the stage, and the principal characters as witnesses; when the villain, who was dug out, proves to have the lost will in his pocket, and the hero gets his rights, and they're married. Curtain."

"Rather sensational, Mr. Higgs."

"Well, yes, sir, a little so; but law, you see, the public likes it laid on thick. It's my opinion as that piece will take."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Sellars. "Nice opportunity for obliging a friend or two, Mr. Higgs. By the way, what a very superior young woman Jane is."

"Yes, sir—very," said Mr. Higgs, gruffly.

"Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!" laughed the butler, poking his visitor in the ribs; "but there, you needn't think that of me, Mr. Higgs. I'm too old now to think of cutting you out. Fifty-five now, Mr. Higgs—fifty-five."

"Are you really, though, sir?" said the visitor.

"Yes, Mr. Higgs," said the butler, with dignity —"I'm fifty-five, and I look down upon the female servants here with a father's eye. Sir Richard and my lady wishes it."

"Do they, though?" said Higgs.

"Yes," said the butler; "and as I was a-saying, Jane's a very superior young woman, and I'm glad to find that she looks a little higher than livery servants. A young woman in a large establishment like this, Mr. Higgs, has many temptations to change her condition; but though a footman in a good uniform is very well to look at, very few ever rises to my position in life; and for a young woman to let herself down to marrying a footman is to settle herself for life with a washtub to work at, and a looking-glass to see herself starve."

"And no money to buy soap," said Higgs, slowly.

"Just so—and no money to buy soap," said Mr. Sellars, acquiescing. "But I'm glad to find our Jane has more sense. By the way, Mr. Higgs, you don't seem to like that there ale. What do you say to a glass of wine?"

"Thanky, sir—no," replied Higgs, helping himself to another horn; "this'll do very nistely. I wish we had such a tap behind the scenes. We often do have tubs and bottles and such

things about the stage; but they're always dummies—hollow as the big drum in the orchestry."

"By the way, Mr. Higgs, I suppose—that is, you do sometimes come across orders for your house?"

"Yes, sir," said Higgs, grinning slowly all across his face, "we often come across 'em, but not often to keep."

"Dear me!" said the butler, in a disappointed tone of voice—"I should have thought you could always have managed to get a party in."

"I don't know nothing about always, Mr. Sellars, sir," said Higgs; "but if you and a friend likes at any time to name a night, and send me word by Jane, I dare say I can work that much for you. But here she is."

In effect, Jane—head nurse—had deputed the care of her charge to Sarah, her second in command, and now responded to the summons she had received respecting the arrival of Mr. Higgs.

Jane smoothed down her apron, shook hands quietly with her visitor, and then stood and

stared hard at the butler, as if to ask him why he did not go. His response, however, was a calm, patronizing nod.

"Don't mind me, Jane," he said, condescendingly.

"Which I don't a bit, Mr. Sellars," said Jane, fishing out a handkerchief, and blowing her nose defiantly, as if it were a war-trump announcing a charge—"only," she continued, "if you're going to stay here, I'm a-going to take my friend into the housekeeper's room, where I aint no business and you have."

"I'm a-going directly, Jane," said the butler, mildly. "I only came to see that your friend had a horn or two of ale."

"Thank you," said Jane, shortly.

"For when we do have professional gentlemen here, I don't like them to go away and say that Sir Richard's house is a mean one."

"Oh!" said Jane, somewhat mollified, but still acidly, "I'm very much obliged, I'm sure."

"Any news upstairs, Jane?" said the butler.

"Nothing pertickler," said Jane.

"Haven't heard when they're going?"

"No, not a word," said Jane. "Her ladyship's been making the Frenchwoman, though, as fine as a she peacock with some of her dresses."

"Phew—w—w—w!" whistled the butler; "I thought there was something."

"Why?" said Jane, snappishly.

"Because Mrs. Timson's been as short as short all day," said the butler.

"Mrs. Timson always is short," said Jane, with a snort like a challenge. "On the strength of being her ladyship's maid, she makes herself just twice as big as her ladyship."

"Well, yes," said the butler, nodding at Higgs, who sat listening and paying attention to his ale—"Mrs. T. can be a little uppish."

"And enough to make her," said Jane, veering round, as if out of opposition; "look how she's put upon. Not content with giving a lot of good things to a strange Frenchwoman as comes into the house after everybody has gone to bed, and without a decent thing to her back, here's her ladyship's own maid set to alter her ladyship's own dresses. But I don't believe as Sir Richard likes it a bit."

"But then, my dear," said the butler, smiling, "it don't matter what a married man likes, he don't get it—it's what his wife likes that rules the day. Ah, Mr. Higgs, I'd keep single, if I was you. But don't you really think Sir Richard likes it, Jane?"

"No—not a bit," was the sharp reply from Jane, whose tongue, once well set going upon an entertaining bit of gossip, did not seem disposed to stop. "I've seen Sir Richard look as cross as cross at her ladyship, and she's snubbed him for it awful. But there, you may trust her ladyship for keeping a husband in his right place."

"That's all very well," said the butler, winking at Mr. Higgs, who sat stolid as one of his own freshly stippled scenes; "but if I was a married man—"

"Which you never will be," said Jane.

"I don't know so much about that," said the butler. "But as I was saying, if I was a married man, I shouldn't like a seedy-looking Frenchman, as looks like a little dancing-master, to be always hanging about the house, and kissing my

wife's hand, she seeming to like it all the time—what do you say, Mr. Higgs?"

Mr. Higgs said nothing, but in a very expressive display of pantomime, he turned up the sleeves of his coat, and moistened the palms of his hands, before clenching his fists and squaring à la Sayers at some seedy-looking Frenchman or Frenchmen unknown.

"Exactly so," said the butler, nodding approval. But Jane was irritated.

"I should be greatly obliged, Mr. Higgs," she said, "if you wouldn't bring that nasty, low, vulgar theayter with you when you come to Grosvenor-square."

Mr. Higgs rolled down his cuffs, subsided, sighed, and glanced at his empty horn.

"Is the little Frenchman good-looking?" said Jane.

"Middling," said Mr. Sellars. "Furren and very thin."

"But you never see nothing of that sort, do you, Mr. Sellars?" said Jane, in a subdued voice, the bit of scandal possessing for her most intense interest.

"What, him a kissing her hand?" said the butler. "Well, I don't say as I have, and I don't say as I haven't. But what I do say is that these Frenchies seem as if they mean to stay; and Sir Richard don't like it, and her ladyship does."

"And if she does, she'll have her way, mark my words if she don't," said Jane, decidedly.

"You may trust her for that," said the butler.

"But I'll tell you one thing," said Jane.

"Well, what?" said the butler.

"That little Frenchwoman—"

"Well—what about her?"

"She don't like her ladyship a bit. She's smooth and pleasant, and when she comes up into the nussery she kisses the child nicely enough; but they're at daggers drawn—her and my ladyship—I can tell you, civil and smiling as they are to one another in their stupid French as no one but themselves can understand."

"But what should they be at daggers drawn for?" said Mr. Sellars.

"What are women generally at daggers

drawn for, eh?" said Jane, with her eyes twinkling brightly. "Don't ask me if you don't know. But you mark my words, Mr. Sellars, see if all this don't make unpleasantry in the time to come, and trouble for everybody—that's all I've got to say."

At this juncture, Mr. James thrust his head into the hall to summon the butler to a bell that required answering—tarrying behind, though, for a moment or two, to look from Jane to Mr. Higgs, and back again; after which he sighed, and scowled, and disappeared, to shake his head at the closed door.

The moment they were relieved of the others' presence Mr. Abram Higgs's face slowly relaxed, until a broad grin overspread it, and from his behaviour he seemed to be suing in a cumbersome way for a chaste salute. Sued for or not, there was something which strongly resembled a snappish refusal, and Abram sighed deeply, but consoled himself by pouring half a horn of ale down his throat.

"Do you always mean to drink ale like that?" said Jane.

"No," said Higgs, slowly and thoughtfully, as if the question took some consideration. "No, my dear, I don't think I do—unless," he added cheerfully, "some one sees that I have a fair supply always ready, free gratis for nothing. But I say, Jane, now we are alone, when's it to be?"

"When's what to be?" said Jane, with asperity; for she belonged to that class of maidens who always deem it their duty to snap, snap, and fire at their intended husbands throughout the long days of their probation.

"Why, the day—when's it to be?"

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" cried Jane—"there's plenty of time to talk about that."

"No there aint, Jane," said Abram, remonstrant.

"Oh, yes, there is," said Jane. "I'm not going to leave a good place, if I know it, for nothing."

"But you wouldn't be leaving a good place for nothing, Jane," said Abram Higgs, mildly.

"Oh, yes, but I should; and I don't want to be married yet, and won't, so I tell you. And,

besides, how could I leave that poor dear child?"

"I should have thought you'd have cared more for me than for other folks' children," said Abram, humbly.

"Then I don't, then—so there now," said Jane. "Likely thing, indeed! I am not going to leave here, so long as they're kind and right to me; so you needn't ask me. If ever there's a bother, perhaps I may; but while I can save a little money, I'd best stop where I am."

"No, you hadn't, Jane," said her suitor, stoutly. "I've saved a nice bit now, and we can furnish two rooms decent; and you can do work for the theayter as may bring in ten shillings a week, clean clear money; and that and my five and twenty won't be nothing to sneeze at."

"Who's going to sneeze at it?" said Jane, tartly. "But it's of no use for you to come bothering me about such stuff, because I'm not going to listen to it."

Abram Higgs sighed.

"I s'pose I may come of an evening, when I can get away?" he said.

"That's just as you like, Mr. Higgs," said Jane, frigidly.

Abram Higgs sighed once more, and seemed to think it advisable to change the subject; so he asked her how the little boy was.

"Nistely," said Jane, "only he gets to be such a limb."

"Don't matter as he's to be a barrynet, like his father," said Abram; "but temper's ruination to a pore man. Keeps him out o' place. Grows, I s'pose?"

"A-growing into a little angel as fast as ever he can," said Jane, eagerly.

"Ah, I don't wonder at that," said Higgs.

"Why?" said Jane.

"'Cause he has such a nurse."

Jane looked at him sharply, to see whether the remark was made in a bantering spirit, or was a real compliment, and finding her visitor's stolid face free from a wrinkle that could be interpreted into a smile, she took it to be genuine.

"Ah!" she said, "some children need have good nurses, for it isn't much notice as their mas

takes of them—what with their evening parties and conversations, and flower shows and operas. As for her ladyship, she seems to forget as she's got a child at all. But it'll come home to her some day, mark my words if it don't."

Abram Higgs shook his head as he gazed in silent admiration at the lady of his heart, whom he evidently looked upon as a prophetess in her peculiar line of life; and he hinted softly that he shouldn't like to be Lady Lawler. Then he set to wondering what peculiar evil would befal the lady.

At last, after softening a very little, Jane announced that she could stay no longer, and at the same moment was summoned by the under-nursemaid to come and speak to Master Clive.

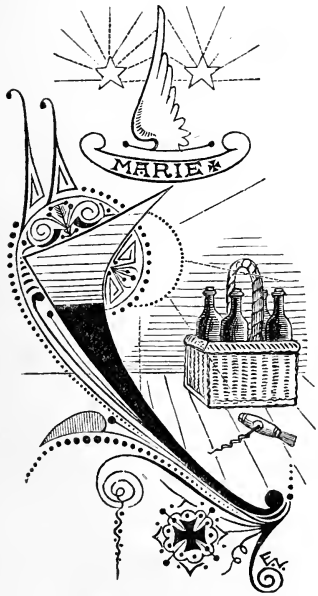
A quick farewell ensued, and Abram sighed as he saw the departure of his sylph.

Turning round to go himself, he was brought up short by the apparition of Mr. James, who confronted him with—

"Here, you sir, I want to have a few words with you!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW JAMES HAD A FEW WORDS.



THE gentleman bearing the name of Abram Higgs was not handsome, but he possessed muscle. His face was decidedly inexpressive, so much so that it was puzzling to find therein anything attractive. It struck you that when Nature made it, and gazed upon her

handiwork, she must have exclaimed, "Well, poor fellow, he must have something to eat with!" so she gave a slash with her knife, and the man had a mouth.

It is a matter of course that handsome men make many impressions on the soft wax of the fair sex; but then, handsome men are very few and far between: hence it must be that the he who is remarkably plain has his chance. It might have been thought that Jane chose Mr. Higgs for his ugliness; possibly, however, she could see merit below the surface, and acted like a sensible woman.

James declared emphatically that he was a beast; but then James was a partial judge, and viewed him from a rival's point of view, scowling savagely whenever they met; and upon the present occasion, when, Jane having gone upstairs, he requested Mr. Higgs to step into the boot-house with him for the exchange of a few words, Abram thought slowly that he had not seen so fine a scowl since Mr. Phelps played Richard the Third at their theatre.

"If you will have the goodness to step this

way, Mr. Higgs," said James, "I will not detain you long."

This was said mincingly, and with an air of mock refinement that ought to have made a great impression upon Higgs; but it did not, for in addition to his taking in things very slowly, Abram had a habit—acquired of course from his surroundings—of thinking that everybody was acting a part. Therefore he was not at all surprised at Mr. James's melodramatic scowl and way of asking him into the boot-house—a large skylighted building, illumined by a single gas jet, which displayed arrangements on one side for cleaning knives, and on the other blacking brushes and bottles, boot trees, and shoe lasts.

Apparently waiting here for a particular reason were the under-butler, in the comfortable negligé of a striped jacket; the coachman, a stout gentleman in a great deal of white neckcloth and a sleeved waistcoat; and the page, a youth about sixteen, who startled his friends with the duality of his nature; for whereas he addressed them one minute in the rumbling tones of a deep bass, manly voice, the next he

had retrograded, or rather gone up, to the treble of boyhood; so that, as the coachman said, you never knew where to have him.

"Hev the goodness to step in here, sir," said James, with dignity; and Abram Higgs went slowly in, for all the world as if he were pushing a wing before him.

James followed smartly, and as soon as he was inside, he closed the half-glass door with a bang, locked it, took the key out with a rattle, and handed it to the coachman, who was seated amongst the blacking brushes smoking his pipe, and taking occasional sips from a horn of ale.

"Hev the goodness to take charge of this, Jarvey," said James, handing the key, which the coachman put in his pocket with a slap.

As for Higgs, he looked slowly round, and nodded to each in turn—Buttons coming in for a wink as well, which wink was a freemasonry way of saying to the lad—

"How did you like the piece you saw when I gave you the order?"

"Now we've got you, I think," said James,

loudly, as he gave a triumphant smile at his fellow-servants.

"Eh?" said Higgs.

"I say," repeated James, "now, I think, we've got you."

"Yes," said Higgs, slowly and stolidly; "I think you've got me."

"Just so," said James. "And now, if you please, I want you, in the presence of these gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!" said the coachman.

"In the presence of these gentlemen," continued James, "to undertake to keep away from this house, where you are not wanted."

"Keep away?" said Higgs, slowly.

"Yes, sir, did you not understand what I said?"

"Oh, yes, I understood what you said well enough," said Higgs; "but I don't understand what you mean."

"Then I must make you, sir," said James.

"Thanky," said Higgs, coolly.

"The fact is, sir," said James, pompously, "you are not wanted here."

"Oh, there you're quite wrong—quite wrong, my lad. I'm wanted safe enough, or else you may be sure I shouldn't come."

"But I say, sir, as you're not wanted," said James, with dignity.

"Oh, I hear what you say, my lad; but when a chap's acting and says as he means to have another chap's blood, he don't mean it, bless you, not a bit."

"Hear, hear, hear!" shouted the coachman again.

"Jest hev the goodness not to interrupt, if you please, Jarvey," said James.

"Hear, he— I mean all right," said the coachman, gruffly.

"Lookye here, Mr. Higgs," said James, pronouncing the word as if it were the concentrated essence of vulgarism—"lookye here. I have told you that you are not wanted here; and, sir, you refuse to understand me. You compel me to lower myself, and to set aside the customary ways of gentlemen respecting such a delicate subject as a lady, and to speak in the coarse, familiar homespun of your rank in society."

"Hear, hear!" said the coachman, again.

"That's one for him," muttered the under-butler, and the page looked on approvingly.

"Now, see here," said Higgs, slowly; "it's getting late, and I want to be off."

"Yes, I've no doubt you do," said James, with a half-laugh; "but we haven't done with you yet."

"Well, then, you'd better make haste, that's all," said Higgs.

"I shall proceed as I please," said James, "for you can't get away. And now, once for all, will you promise to stay away from this house?"

"No," said Higgs, stoutly.

"Then," said James, "my good fellow, I shall be obliged to make you. Henry, hev the goodness to hold my coat. Jarvey, you will see fair. This place is quite retired, and we shall not be heard in the house."

"Oh," said Higgs, "that's it, is it? You want to fight."

"Yes, sir," said James, divesting himself of his outer attire. "I intend either to make you

promise what I wish, or to punish your insolence. Are you ready?"

"Well," said Higgs, slowly, "I don't know that I am; for I can't say as I like fighting."

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed James, sardonically, "I suppose not. Then will you promise to give up all claims to the young lady who resides here?"

"Do you mean Jane?" said Higgs.

"Yes, sir, I mean Miss Jane Smithers," said James, haughtily.

"Do you mean, will I give her up?" said Higgs.

"My good fellow," said James, with great dignity, "your comprehension seems to me to be really of the lowest order. I repeat it for you. I'll repeat it for you a dozen times if you like—that is what I do mean."

"What, give up Jane?" said Higgs again.

"Yes, sir, give up Miss Jane Smithers," said James, with more dignity than before.

"Then, come on," said Higgs.

"Let me hold your coat," squeaked the page.

"No, thanky," said Higgs.

"Or your hat," growled the page from his pedal pipes.

But Abram Higgs did not seem to hear him; for he slowly moistened his palms, doubled up his fists, and as James struck an elegant attitude, copied from the noble art of self-defence, Abram turned himself edgewise to his antagonist, and held out one big fist at arm's length, rigid as the bough of a tree.

Now, lest any refined reader should imagine that here follows a full and particular account, à la *Bell's Life*, of the great mill between the Dandy Footman and the Pet of the Ballet, with an accurate description of the various rounds, embellished with the proper prize ring sauce of cant phraseology, we beg to state that the encounter was very short, sharp, and perfectly bloodless; inasmuch as Abram Higgs constantly held out, as if for James's inspection, that one big, bony fist of his at arm's length, presenting it always very near to his rival's visual organs, whilst, with his other fist held close to his body, he performed a sort of spiral movement, half-way round to the right, half-way round to the left, as

if by and by he meant to bore a hole right through his opponent's chest.

However, apparently nothing daunted, James, whose sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, danced a little to the right, and then a little to the left; then he made a hit at Abram Higgs's nose, with his right fist, which must have produced most unpleasant results, had the said nose been a yard nearer to the striker. Failing here, he tried with the other fist; and this time the assault was evidently intended for the enemy's mouth. But here again there was failure, four feet long.

The page was in ecstasies, and the coachman and under-butler audibly signified their approval of the science displayed; for James now made a series of feints and blows at nothing, shaking his head, ducking it, holding it a little to the right, then a little to the left, and at last administered two sweeping cuts right and left at Abram Higgs's rigidly held out fist, but without altering its position more than a few inches each way.

"I think the end of the first round ought to be now," said the under-butler.

"Yes, cert'n'y," said the coachman. "Have a drop of beer, my lads."

Nothing loath, the two combatants beered themselves, and then once more returned to the conflict.

The tactics were precisely the same, only that James displayed a considerable amount more agility—dodging, feinting, dancing here, there, right, left, advance, retire, shake, bend, butt, dive, recover, and begin again; till Abram Higgs seemed to get tired of the display, and, watching his opportunity, after holding his left fist out all the time for James to smell, which the latter emphatically declined to do, he suddenly threw out his right fist so sharply that it came in contact with the third button from the bottom of James's waistcoat, when at the same moment there was heard that peculiar ejaculation to which the paviours of our streets give vent when they bring down their rammers; and, in theatrical parlance, James was discovered lying of a heap in the dust, in the extreme corner beneath the knifeboard.

"Pull him out, and give him some ale," said

the coachman, without attempting to move from his throne amongst the blacking brushes.

"But he won't come," said the page, who was dragging at one leg.

"Why don't you 'elp him out, Ennery?" said the coachman.

And urged by the rebuke, Ennery proceeded to haul out his fellow-servant, who gave a loud groan, and then sat down as limp as so much jelly.

"Time's up," said the coachman, at a venture.

James lay perfectly still.

"I think," said Ennery, "that the affair of honour is over."

"Well, yes," said the coachman; "I don't think we can do any more. Mr. Higgs, sir, your very good health."

"Thanky," said Higgs, slowly; and then stooping over James, he said—"I'm going now, my lad, so good night. I don't think I've hurt you very much, and if you want me again, I shall be back on Friday."

James remained perfectly unconscious; while Higgs solemnly shook hands all round, and was

let out by the coachman, who went to see him to the door; but directly the closing was heard, James suddenly came to himself, leaped up, struck an attitude as if to recommence the fray, and then looked round as if in astonishment.

"Where is he?" he exclaimed.

"Why, he's gone," said the page, grinning.

"A cowardly wretch," cried James, excitedly; "but I'll be revenged!"

And then he resigned himself to the page, who carefully brushed him down.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

TIME glided on, and the Rivières were still inmates of Sir Richard Lawler's home: not welcome guests, as far as the baronet was concerned, for more than once his behaviour had been such as to make Rivière exclaim to the partner of his exile—

"But they are brutal, these English. He treats me like a dog; and yet it is only his way, for his heart is large and full of gratitude towards me."

"Do you think so, Louis?" said madame.

"Think? Am I not sure? I could have turned upon him but this day with anger for his words,

only miladi laughed, and said, 'Richard is so brusque. Don't mind him, Monsieur Rivière; it is only his insular manner. Is it not, Richard?'"

"And what said he?" inquired madame.

"He laughed, and said, yes, it was but his insular way; and I was ready to embrace him."

In fact, any coldness displayed by Sir Richard was more than compensated by his lady, who immediately grew effusive, and insisted on their guests making the house in Grosvenor-square their home.

"I sha'n't stand it much longer, Addy," exclaimed Sir Richard, one evening, after they were alone. "I shall give that wretched little Frenchman a couple of five-pound notes, and tell him to go to the devil."

"You'll do no such thing, Dick," was the reply.

"Indeed, but I will; for I'm sick of it."

"You had better be careful," said Lady Lawler, maliciously. "The French are very free with their challenges."

"Challenges! What, duelling! I should like to see the scoundrel have the insolence — to

dare—Why, confound him, I'd hand him over to the police."

"And have it in all the papers next day."

"And whose fault would that be?" exclaimed Sir Richard, angrily. "Now, look here, Addy. You're playing off this wretched fellow—who has no more legs than a jackass, no more biceps than a broomstick—against me, to—to make me angry—to make me jealous; and, by Jove, I won't be! It's too contemptible. I won't condescend to be angry about it."

"No," said Lady Lawler, fanning herself gently, "I would not."

"But I won't stand it, either," he continued. "It shall come to an end somehow. It's—there, I'll say it, though I did not mean to—it's my belief that, if I had not said a word about it, they would have been gone before now—"

"Very likely," said Lady Lawler, with the greatest nonchalance.

"And that you keep them here on purpose to annoy me."

He looked round, as if expecting another remark; but Lady Lawler was still fanning her-

self, and, according to appearances, was not taking the slightest notice of her lord and master —who tugged at his great blond moustache, scowled, and then strode out of the room, hot and angry.

"It isn't worth making a fuss about," he exclaimed, as he went out of the room; "but, if I do come to hot words with that—"

He stopped short, unclenched his fists, and smoothed his rugged forehead; for he became aware that James was looking at him, and had probably overheard his remark.

"Well, sir?" he exclaimed.

"I was going to light the gas in the smoking-room, Sir Richard," said the man, meekly.

"Then go and light it," growled the baronet; and he scowled at the man till he had disappeared.

"And if I find they get talking about this in the servants' hall, I'll—I'll discharge the first scoundrel who dares say a word."

A threat that he was not likely to put in force, though he would have been ten times more wroth had he known that the drawing-room

relations with the French guests had been the theme of his servants' conversation for some time past, and that, had he determined to make dismissal the penalty for talking about these matters, he would not have had a servant left.

It was evident, though, that Madame Rivière was not comfortable in her present position; and again and again she hinted at the desirability of their leaving, and taking up a position of independence. This was generally on the evening of some day when Lady Lawler had been more than usually kind—taking her out in the carriage for exercise, or upon some shopping expedition, defraying all expenses, and never ceasing to pay embarrassing small attentions to the gentle little woman—embarrassing, for, setting aside her distrust of Lady Lawler, Marie Rivière felt that she was leading a life of indolent luxury, while her husband was spending hour after hour wandering about the streets of the great city, seeking vainly the means of obtaining subsistence.

They were both too proud to say much upon this subject to their host and hostess, while the

latter were too ignorant upon the point to see the difficulties of the case. It was something incomprehensible to them that two people should want money to provide for their daily wants. Of course they knew what poverty was—had heard it spoken of—had seen cases in low neighbourhoods; but seeing the poverty of others, and realizing it to the point of being poor and suffering deeply, these are two very different things. To realize poverty, one must have been in want, for no description can bring its wretchedness and privations home to the heart of him who is in the land of plenty.

It was a difficult matter to arrange, this assistance of the Rivières. Sir Richard Lawler was too indifferent, and her ladyship too ignorant. If Rivière had said to Lady Lawler, "Let me have five hundred pounds, to ensure independence while I seek out some engagement," her ladyship would have exclaimed, "Yes, certainly, my dear Monsieur Rivière," have thrust her hand into her purse, and found that she had only a five-pound note and some loose silver; and, lastly, have gone off to her husband, and worried

him until he had written the necessary cheque. The matter would have been simplicity itself; and allowing say a week, at the ouside, for the bringing of Sir Richard Lawler into shape, the thing would have been done.

Yes, but there was the asking. Louis Rivière might perhaps have lowered himself to this pitch for the sake of saving his wife from suffering, but not for himself.

It was one evening, after a day of unsatisfactory wanderings, that Rivière stood, candle in hand, leaning against the chimneypiece his wife gazing earnestly the while in his pallid face.

"Still nothing, then?" she said, after a long pause.

"Still nothing, Marie, mon ange," he said, softly—"still nothing. Work seems to be a myth, a dancing light in some marsh; and, as I run to grasp it, still it flees from my hand. Ah, my child," he groaned, "how I have envied the grimy working men that I have seen pouring out of factory and workshop—independent, happy in their work, fearing nothing; eating their well-earned food, returning proudly to face wife

and children, sleeping the restful sleep of the heart at peace; while I—I— My child, I go through the streets ashamed, blushing for my beggary; and come back here, a very abject, to be the scoff and scorn of those canaille of servants. Ah, sacre! if I but had them here!"

He crushed down his heel upon the rich carpet, and stood frowning and angry, till the soft, sweet voice of Marie seemed to calm this wild ebullition of spirit; and, as she spoke, he turned to her smiling, to lay his hand upon her shoulder.

"Still we are free, Louis," she whispered.

"Still we are free," he repeated.

"Yes, we are free," she whispered, placing her arms upon his shoulders, and kissing him fondly; "but do not think me unkind and ungrateful when I say that it is hardly the freedom we have longed for. These people are very kind, but—"

"Ah, bah! do not think of it," he said, cheerfully. "I do not like it at times, and then it goes away, and I feel better. They do not mind. Sir Richard is the gruff Englishman, but miladi

is goodness itself. She does all she can to make us happy."

"But it makes me unhappy," said Marie, sadly.

"Unhappy? Yes. But you mean more than simple unhappiness. You are thinking!" he said, sharply.

"Oh, Louis," she said, clinging to him, "do not be angry. I cannot help it. Think how that you are all in all to me—how I love you with a love that has grown stronger day by day. It is wicked, doubting, cruel; but I cannot help the feelings; and it seems to me that I live in dread of this fine, handsome Englishwoman. She appears to me to overshadow me, to hide me from my husband's eyes; and to be daily drawing you farther and farther away from your simple, plain little wife, now that she has but just won you back to her side."

"Tut! tut! tut!—silly one!" cried Rivière, caressing her as she clung to him, sobbing; "but these are the words of a child—a baby. Have we not troubles enough, without making fresh ones? These feelings—these fancies of

yours—what are they? Nothing—nothing at all."

"Take me away, Louis—take me away," she said, hysterically. "Take me away from this place—it is hateful to me."

"But, my little one, what can I do? I cannot take you out into the streets. You cannot bear again the miseries of our escape. Think how tender, how delicate you are now. Try and bear with it for awhile, my own, and then we will go. But to go now—it would be folly. I am helpless. What can I do? I ask for work here—mechanical work. They shake their heads. A dozen—twenty—a hundred Englishmen are waiting. And then the barbarians smile at my physique, as they compare it with that of their own brawny giants."

"But a room—a crust," murmured Marie.

"Bah! child, I cannot starve you for your fancies—it would be cruel. And look, again: I try for music—for to teach French. Mon Dieu! there are a thousand poor exiles struggling, one against the other, to get the bread;

and they underbid one another in their hunger. This London is a cruel place, Marie."

"But," cried Marie, pitifully, "I am weak and ill now, and the thoughts I have here seem hard to bear."

"Think then, my child," he said, tenderly, "think then what they would be in some wretched garret in the French quarter, where all is misery around. I should be away from you day after day, and you would not have a soul to whom you could speak. Have patience, little one. You should be in comfort here. Bear with any little slights, and soon we shall be away. I have not been idle. I have made plans, and they will some day bear fruit. It is not my wish to stay; but now this place is a refuge, a shelter from the storm. And miladi, she is kind?"

"Yes, she is kind," said Marie, looking at her husband in a strange, dreamy way.

"Then be at peace," he exclaimed, almost harshly, in the authoritative tones in which he spoke. "Do not anger me with such childish thoughts. You—jealous! It is too much,

Marie. You make me mad. It is cruel—it is unjust."

Marie Rivière drew herself back so as to gaze more fully in her husband's eyes, which met hers without blenching. But at that moment there seemed to float before her vision the handsome, fair, bold face of Lady Lawler; and as she shrank away from her husband's grasp, a shiver ran through her, and the tears that now fell silently were scalding to her aching eyes.

CHAPTER XX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

H, how nice it must be to be a beast!

Of course, when one says this, one does not mean a nasty beast, but a nice beast.

Now, by a nice beast, I mean a horse. All the same, though, it would not be very satisfactory to be a horse. If he be the property of the well-to-do, he gets groomed and doctored too much, is over-ridden or over-driven, or kept

standing in the cold, draughty streets. And if he be the very own of the ill-to-do—poor wretch!

I need say no more to people who know the fate of the British horse as he slowly descends in the scale of misfortune, from the carriage to the cab, street horse, costermonger, knacker's yard, cats'-meat barrow.

No, I should not like to be a horse—but say one of the smooth, sleek, striped or spotted, glossy-coated creatures of the feline race, who curl up to sleep; wake up, shake themselves, go in the warm sun, and give themselves a lick down, and they are clean. Or stop—no—better still, a squirrel, for he carries his own blanket or quilt, and curls up warm and snug when he goes to sleep.

One thinks of all this on account of the troubles of dress, and the time given to so unsatisfactory a performance. Dressing or undressing, what a time it takes; and, after all said and done, what an unpleasant hour that is before getting into bed. Now, were one a beast, there would be only the quiet curl up and sleep; but,

with the "human warious," what a deal there is to do!

To begin with: it is late, and after a busy day, whether of work or play, one is tired. Then, as a matter of course, if one is tired, one (perhaps two!) is cross, and up come all sorts of troubles for discussion;—if you are single, for discussion with your conscience; if you are married, with your wife or husband. And—confound them!—these little troubles will not come in their ordinary guise. If it were morning, they would be dressed in the garments given by a mind at rest, and the brightness of the day; but at night they troop in black and ghostly, with an aspect that is chilling, and too formidable to be lightly dismissed.

Ah, that last hour before going to bed is not a pleasant one. Conscience or your wife is too chatty, and reminds you too strongly of your debts. He was a wise ancestor who invented that pleasant glass called a nightcap—evidently as a pleasant play upon words, for what the term should be is extinguisher, a putter-out or smotherer of carking cares that infest you, and

will not fold their tents, like the Arabs, nor as silently steal away.

It was in this last hour—precisely the same one as that which had filled poor Marie Rivière so full of trouble—that a similar conversation was taking place in two neighbouring apartments —to wit, in Lady Lawler's bed-room and Sir Richard's dressing-room, the door of communication being open, and the remarks sent flying to and fro.

They had come upstairs in anything but an amiable frame of mind—Lady Lawler first, and Sir Richard after staying to smoke a cigar to settle his nerves, but without the desired effect.

"Humph! Not in bed yet?" was the commencement from Sir Richard, as he set down his candlestick and engaged in a battle with his bootjack, which ended in sundry evil wishes being hurled at the bootmaker, consequent upon the white leather lining of Sir Richard's patent boot catching his heel, and being drawn right out, and refusing to be kicked away.

"No," said Lady Lawler, coldly—"I'm not in bed yet, Dick."

"Humph! so I see."

Then there was a silence of a few moments' duration, during which the baronet installed himself in his dressing gown, and pettishly threw coat in one direction and vest in another.

"Who the devil's been taking my soap?" he roared the next minute.

"I have, Dick," said her ladyship, coolly. "You can have mine. I don't like the brown Windsor."

"Bring it here, then," said Dick, sulkily. "Wish to goodness you wouldn't be so fond of—"

"Can't, dear," murmured her ladyship, evidently speaking with hair pins in her lips, and her chin bent low over her breast. "My hair's down. That stupid girl!"

Dick did not stop to hear any more, but stamped heavily into the next room, snatched the soap from the dish, and knocked the lid from the marble top into a footpan, where it was smashed to atoms.

Perhaps it is as well not to note down the ejaculation uttered by Sir Richard Lawler, Bart.,

apropos of all soap dishes. Lady Lawler, however, said—

"Tut! tut! tut! And that service is so hard to match!"

"No business to take my soap," was growled from the dressing-room; while, evidently moved by vanity, her ladyship shook down the whole mass of her loosened hair that had been so carefully pinned up half an hour before by her maid, and sat looking at herself in the broad glass, drawing the tawny tresses now this way, now that, and ending by smiling as if pleased with some thought which played through her imagination.

The silence took the attention of Sir Richard, who now appeared at the door crowned with a brush, which his right hand held in position.

"That's pretty!" he growled. "How much longer are you going to keep on with that foolery?"

Lady Lawler's reply took the form of a grimace, which she gave him from amidst her veil of hair, reflected in the glass.

Sir Richard saw it, growled thunderously, re-

turned to his own glass, and then sent a malicious bolt at his wife by asking, in a sneering, petulant voice, whether she had had enough French for one evening.

"I wish, Dick, that you would not be such a bear," was the reply. "You were quite rude to poor Monsieur Rivière this evening. Poor, dear little man! You'll frighten them away with your brusqueness, if you don't mind."

"I only wish I could," he growled, and there was the sound of a brush being banged down on his table.

"I don't," was the cool reply.

"I'm sick of them," said Sir Richard. "The very servants are talking about them—I'm sure of it."

"Very likely," said Lady Lawler, quietly. "Poor things, they must have something to talk about, so why not that?"

"Humph!"

"They're not like you, Dick," said Lady Lawler, maliciously—"with your brain stored with a thousand subjects ready to afford you enjoyment."

"That's right—sneer away!" he exclaimed.

"Then what has the servants' conversation got to do with us? Are we to model ourselves to please them?"

"I tell you," exclaimed Sir Richard, who was not ready with a reply—"I tell you, I'm sick of it. I hate their French ways, these Rivières. I wish we had never seen them."

"Then it is most ungrateful, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself—speaking like that after their behaviour to you in Paris!"

"Well, that's paid for now, at all events," grumbled Sir Richard. "If not, for goodness' sake let them have money, and go."

"Money!" said Lady Lawler, contemptuously. "Money—always money! Just as if they would take money! You seem to think that money will pay for or buy anything."

"So it will," he grumbled.

"No, it will not," said she, tartly. "Money! and to a gentleman of Monsieur Rivière's sensitiveness and polish. Ah, Richard, I wish you were more like him."

There was a crash here, and the splintering up of a little china cold cream pot—for Sir Richard

Lawler was applying a little of the soft unguent to a crack or chap upon his lip when his lady made the above remark, one which startled him so that he dropped the little pot, and stood for a few moments choking with wrath.

Was he mad—drunk—dreaming? Did he hear aright? Wish he were more like Rivière! —that wretched, scurvy little Frenchman!—he, Sir Richard Lawler, five feet eleven in his boots —a man all muscle and strength, who used to pull stroke in his college eight, though he was ploughed for smalls—a baronet of a good old Norman family—wish he were more like that shabby, little, beggarly exile! Pooh! it was ludicrous!

He laughed aloud: at least, he gave utterance to a noise that was meant for a laugh, but bore about as much resemblance to it as the sardonic bray of the melodramatic villain in a transpontine play. So discordant and strange was the noise, that, coming as it did close upon the breakage, Lady Lawler was startled, and hurried to the door.

"What is the matter, Richard?"

"Matter!" he exclaimed. "Oh, nothing—nothing whatever. Pray go back. I was only a little amused. But I think you said that money might offend Monsieur Rivière."

"Of course it would," said her ladyship, slowly returning to her seat, but watching her husband curiously the while. "I'm sure you'll offend him some day with your rudeness."

"Some day? How much longer are they going to stay, then? Haven't you had enough French yet?"

"As to how much longer they are going to stay, I cannot give you an answer; but certainly not long, for monsieur is too proud a gentleman to remain under obligations to any one. But with respect to my having had enough French, I think there could be no better opportunity for improving one's accent and gaining conversational ease; so I have made arrangements with Monsieur Rivière to give me a long course of lessons."

"What?" roared Sir Richard.

"I have made arrangements with Monsieur Riviere to give me a long course of lessons."

"To—give—you—you—my wife—lessons?"

"Yes—to—give—me—me—your wife—lessons," retorted Lady Lawler, in a higher key. "Pray, what is there extraordinary in that? And I'm sure that a course would do you good, Richard; and a few in politeness as well."

"I'm—"

"What do you say?" cried her ladyship, cutting him short. "I'm sure nothing could be better. Monsieur Rivière tells me that he finds it necessary, on account of his present income being so small, to give lessons in his native tongue; and he wishes us to give him a few introductions to people whom we know."

"And we shall do nothing of the kind," said Sir Richard, firmly.

"Yes, you will," said her ladyship, calmly, as she passed a great ivory-backed brush through her long hair.

"And what is more," exclaimed Sir Richard, now very wroth, as he stood framed in the doorway, and also brush-armed, but with a pair which he had been applying to his head—"and what is more, I forbid you to take these lessons.

It is preposterous—it is absurd—it—it—it's indecent," he exclaimed, brushing his head furiously.

"And why? Why?" she exclaimed as angrily, a couple of red spots beginning to glow in her milky cheeks. "What do you mean, sir? Please have the goodness to explain."

"There's no explanation needed, madame," he exclaimed, brushing away till the tears stood in his eyes. "I have said that I will not allow it, and I will not."

"Oh, indeed," exclaimed Lady Lawler, standing up, and turning to face him for a moment, with flashing eyes. And, certainly, as she stood there, in her long white robe, and wild, dishevelled hair, she looked very beautiful; and in spite of his height, Sir Richard, whose attire was not becoming, and whose hair was brushed down over his forehead, looked something approaching to the contemptible.

Possibly he knew that he stood at a disadvantage, for he certainly winced beneath his lady's gaze; and she quietly turned and reseated herself, saying—

"I have told monsieur that I will assist his wishes by taking lessons of him, and I shall take them—as many as I please."

And she sat back gazing into her mirror—not at herself, but at the angry reflected visage of her husband, who stood with ruffled hair and half-raised brushes, ready to speak, but with the words refusing to come.

He, too, could see the face reflected in the long glass, and probably felt how ineffective was his appearance; but his anger grew hotter as he saw the face of his wife soften, till it was radiant with a merry smile, as she exclaimed—

"Oh, Dick, what a guy you do look!"

Sir Richard Lawler replied loudly, but mechanically, for he banged the door of communication, and when alone he whispered an oath between his teeth to his shaving glass; while on her side, Lady Lawler nodded half a dozen times to herself, and muttered—

"I shall do just as I like."

Soon after this they retired—Lady Lawler determined, on her part, to take her lessons; and Sir Richard with his mind made up that

he would contrive to let Rivière know that his presence was not wanted, even intending to proceed to broad insult if hints would not suffice.

Possibly Sir Richard Lawler did not foresee the consequences that might follow a broad insult offered to a fiery little Frenchman.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN UNPLEASANT EVENING.

THE next day there was relief for Madame Rivière and for Sir Richard Lawler.

Dinner was about half over, when, in the course of conversation, Rivière, who had been particularly quiet during the repast, suddenly announced, in a calm, grave tone, that he had been making plans for the future; and that, eternally grateful as he was to his kind host and hostess, he could not think of imposing longer upon the generosity of such dear friends.

Madame Rivière's eyes flashed with pleasure, and, in spite of herself, she could not help glancing triumphantly at Lady Lawler, whose return

glance, though, sent a chill through her breast. This announcement was news to Marie, for she had not seen her husband since his return, after being absent all day; and it seemed to her that her prayers to him had prevailed.

"She has been telling him what I said last night," thought Sir Richard, glowering at his plate. Then he looked across the table at Lady Lawler, to meet an indifferent, scornful *œillade*, while she spoke to Rivière, saying how sorry she was—how sudden the announcement, et cetera. But the matter soon dropped by common consent; for it had not escaped the notice of Lady Lawler that Mr. Sellars, the butler, and James, her ladyship's footman, had pricked up their ears, and were very busy round the table.

According to custom when they were alone with the Rivières, upon Lady Lawler leaving the dessert for the drawing-room Rivière and Sir Richard soon followed; for the refugee cared little for the wine, and found Sir Richard anything but a pleasant host; while, moved by a low feeling of doubt, the latter could not rest in peace away from the drawing-room, lest Madame Ri-

vière should have retired, and his wife be engaged in a tête-à-tête.

But now that there were no servants present, Lady Lawler, who felt sure that Sir Richard had been insulting Rivière, whose words at dinner had sounded bitter and sarcastic, at once threw down the gauntlet to her husband, as she beckoned Rivière to her side with her fan.

"I am so grieved, Monsieur Rivière, that you should have come to this sudden determination," she said, softly. "I fear that we have ill performed the part of hosts, and you have been very dull."

"But it has been a Paradise," said Rivière, with empressement, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. "It is happiness to be anywhere in the presence of Lady Lawler."

"You confounded little cad!" muttered Sir Richard to himself, as he stood by the drawing-room table, jerking the books about, too much occupied to hear a low sigh from the sofa close at hand, as Madame Rivière flushed deeply and then turned very pale.

"You will not forget my lessons, Monsieur

Rivière?" said Lady Lawler. "Those must go on all the same."

"Indeed, no. I could not forget the kindness that enables me to commence these duties. No, I shall not forget, but come and give you many long, long lessons, till you speak our dear language better than your teacher. I begin with you at once—is it not so?"

"Oh, yes—we commence to-morrow, I hope," said Lady Lawler loudly, and glancing at her husband.

"To-morrow it shall be," said Rivière; "and I hope to have many, many pupils—to make quite a fortune. Sir Richard will, I am sure, give us his good word?"

He looked at the baronet, who seemed to be deeply immersed in the book he had taken up, and was now sitting on a lounge, with his back to them; but, oddly enough, opposite to the mirror over a console table.

"To be sure—oh, yes!" exclaimed Lady Lawler, answering for her lord. "Sir Richard shall do all he can for your advancement."

An observer might have seen Sir Richard

Lawler's shoulders twitch at that word *shall*, but he did not turn his head.

"It will be such a relief," said Rivière, enthusiastically. "We shall be very happy in our work. Marie there and I shall be rich—eh, Marie? Say, child, we shall be quite rich, shall we not?"

Madame Rivière murmured assent, as her eyes wandered uneasily from her husband to Lady Lawler, and then to Sir Richard; who, she could see, was now gazing eagerly at her, as if trying to read in her countenance the same feelings as those which troubled him so sorely. But the moment she saw that she was observed, she, as it were, shrank into herself, cast down her eyes, and sipped her coffee without a word.

"We shall never be out of your debt, Sir Richard," said Rivière, in a calm, incisive fashion, after placing Lady Lawler's cup upon the table; and to Sir Richard's eyes it seemed that, in the act, for a brief moment his fingers tightly pressed those of his lady. "But times may alter," he said, somewhat bitterly. "Who can say but that you may be arrested some day

for supposed complicity in an attempt upon the life of your Queen, and then who knows what may happen?"

"Yes, who knows what may happen?" said Sir Richard, rising on being thus appealed to, and speaking in a rough, almost rude, fashion, as he turned his back offensively upon Rivière, and walked towards the window.

Rivière's sallow face flushed, as he turned to glance for a moment at Lady Lawler, hardly knowing whether to resent his host's behaviour or not.

"But these English nobles are pigs!" he muttered to himself; but his anger passed away, as he saw Lady Lawler smilingly inviting him to a seat at her side, where he went for a while, till at a hint he rose, offered his arm, and led her to the piano, where he stood leaning over her, and turning the leaves of the music, as she rattled through two or three brilliant arrangements of popular airs passably well.

Meanwhile, Sir Richard stood gazing moodily from the window, and Madame Rivière—bent of head, and with eyes veiled with tears, tried hard

to distinguish the stitches in the intricate piece of embroidery upon which she was at work. Now and again, she glanced almost shudderingly at the piano, where, with all the effusive gallantry of a French lover of music, Rivière was still bending over Lady Lawler, making from time to time complimentary speeches, to which the latter replied by turning her handsome bold eyes full upon his, and uttering some whispered words inaudible to the others, as roulade after roulade answered the rapid fingers upon the keys.

"How vain, how foolish!" thought Madame Rivière; "does he not see how it angers Sir Richard? Why does he not think?"

But Rivière seemed neither to think of nor see anything but the handsome woman by his side; and he redoubled his attentions, forgetful of the effect they might have on wife or husband. It appeared at last as if a scene were imminent, for Sir Richard crossed the room, threw himself into a chair, and took up a book as if about to read. The next moment he tossed it down, and crossed to Madame Rivière, plunging roughly

and at once into a blundering speech about some current topic, but in so strange a manner that it was evident to his guest that his thoughts were elsewhere; and he soon returned to the window, where he stood half hidden by the curtain.

Another piece and another were played, and the positions did not change. The urn was brought in by the servants, but the tea remained unmade; and as if aware that she was watched, Lady Lawler continued to engross the whole of Rivière's thoughtless attention.

At last Sir Richard, who had been scowling at the musical couple till his patience seemed to be quite exhausted, suddenly exclaimed aloud—

"Hang it, Addy, I cannot stand this any longer!" and strode across the room to where Lady Lawler with affected, and Rivière with real, surprise, turned upon him astonished looks.

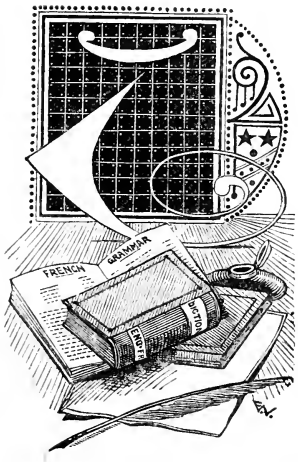
He had been as earnestly watched though himself by Madame Rivière, who for some minutes past had been sitting with her colour going and coming, her lips quivering, and fingers trembling, so that she could hardly hold her work. Troubled as she was at heart respecting

her own feelings, and sensitive too on behalf of Sir Richard Lawler, she was more filled with anxiety for him whose frivolous behaviour had so wrung her, with or without cause for uneasiness she could not say. She had, then, been judging Sir Richard's feelings by her own; and, as she read his anger in his looks, kept her eyes fixed upon him anxiously, ready, as it were, to give her husband warning of the impending storm. She told herself, as she sat there, that she was a woman—weak and confiding—stung by her jealous feelings, but striving hard to bear the slights, to crush down her agony. Sir Richard, she argued, on the contrary, was a strong, bold man, stung to anger by that which gave her pain. She had been dreading for long that a collision would ensue, and yet she had not dared to interfere—hoping, as she did, that each moment would see a peaceable end to so unpleasant a scene; but when, at last, she saw Sir Richard start forward, and heard his exclamation, she, too, hurriedly left her seat, and feeling that the moment had come for interference, she strove to be ready in the emergency.

But Marie Rivière had not reckoned upon her feebleness: the room seemed to swim before her eyes; she staggered, and would have fallen heavily, had not Sir Richard Lawler caught her in his arms.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADAME IS BETTER.



THE Frenchman uttered a cry like that of a woman as he caught sight of his falling wife. In an instant he was by her side, forgetful of everything but her condition, and striving hard to bring her back to consciousness. He did not see the look of rage in Sir Richard Lawler's face, nor the half-angry, half-contemptuous glance darted at him by his lady.

"Here — quick, pray — water — wine! Will miladi ring? The poor child has fainted. The room was too hot. She must have looked to me for help, and I was so occupied with the music that I saw it not. Why was I not at her side?"

Lady Lawler directed a look at Rivière that might have been interpreted as reproachful; but it did not reach its mark, being intercepted halfway by Sir Richard, who was furious.

Still Rivière saw nothing, but continued:

"Yes, yes, poor child, it was the heat, and she is still weak with our many troubles. Thanks, Sir Richard, I am ever in your debt. I will lay her here upon this couch for a few minutes, and then take her to our room. Poor child, how white she is!"

"Take Monsieur Rivière down to your study for a while, Richard," said Lady Lawler, firmly, as her maid, who had been summoned, now entered with water and eau de Cologne. "There, Monsieur Rivière, leave her to me. I will send for you both soon. We will bring her to."

Sir Richard set his teeth, and seemed disposed to resist; but Lady Lawler never removed her

eyes from his for a moment, and, seeming to control him, drove him slowly to the door, where he grew more wrathful than ever.

"I obey at your word, miladi," said Rivière, stooping first to kiss the pale forehead of his wife, and then bending low over Lady Lawler's hand, to press his lips lightly upon her heavily jewelled fingers.

For a moment Lady Lawler swept to the door, leaned upon her husband's arm, and whispered a few words; after which she passed Rivière with a smile, and he followed Sir Richard from the room without a word to the study, where the baronet sat down silently, and gazed at him in an uneasy fashion; while he took a tiny book from his pocket, detached from it a leaf, and proceeded to make himself a cigarette from some very common tobacco, lighted it, and lay back in his chair, furtively watched by Sir Richard while he sent little puffs of smoke towards the ceiling.

It was with something like a feeling of shame that Sir Richard, with his anger now somewhat abated, proceeded to help himself to a costly

Hudson from out of a cedar cabinet upon the table, and lit the fragrant roll, to puff at it heavily. Something like a feeling of compunction came over him, in spite of his anger—which seemed, after all, to be more directed at his wife than at his guest.

"Poor little beggar!" he thought. "He is, after all, not worth being savage about."

Perhaps it was the parting address of Lady Lawler, perhaps the mollifying influence of the cigar, that produced this change. At all events, there was no disposition evinced, on the one part, to come to words; while, on the other, Rivière sat calm and thoughtful—till a summons was brought by the messenger James, and the gentlemen ascended once more to the drawing-room, where they found Lady Lawler presiding over the tea table, Madame Rivière being much better, she said, and having retired for the evening.

The poor little woman was too much troubled at heart, though, to stay away; and before long she descended to the drawing-room, to sit, pale and wan, watching every look, listening eagerly

to every word, and magnifying nearly everything; for her senses were distempered, and she read disloyalty to herself in every act.

As for Sir Richard, his resentment seemed to have passed; but any attempt at conversation proved a failure, and on all sides the hour for retiring was gladly welcomed, to put an end to what had been a dreary evening—the last the Rivières were to spend beneath Sir Richard Lawler's roof.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN ALARM.

BREAKFAST the next morning was a sociable meal. Even the servants looked cheerful at the prospect of losing their guests—Mr. Sellars smiled blandly, while James indulged himself in a sniggering grin.

"He thinks," he said to the under butler, apropos of Mr. Sellars' smile—"he thinks they'll make him a present; but if they do, they'll have to borrow it."

But James was wrong; for he, in company with the butler and the rest of the servants, received each a gratuity wrapped up neatly in

paper, and accompanied by a few words of thanks, written in not the best of English.

How the money was raised was a mystery, but it was not thrown away, the impression made afterwards proving of value to Rivière in the troublous times to come.

As before said, the breakfast proved to be a sociable meal, Lady Lawler seizing every opportunity to pay some attention to the nervous little woman at her left. Sir Richard, feeling relieved, in anticipation, of a great burden, softened down into quite a spirit of cordiality, chatting familiarly with Rivière, and talking about his future prospects.

"I'm really sorry you're going, you know," he said once; and then, catching his wife's eye, he reddened like a schoolboy as he saw her amused smile.

"I am very, very grateful, Sir Richard," said Rivière, gravely; "and I shall never forget."

The breakfast finished, the party adjourned to the study, from whence the ladies went to the drawing-room, perfectly ignorant of a dis-

pute going on upon the back stairs about the departing visitors' luggage.

Mr. Sellars had instructed James to fetch the light boxes down; and James, in dudgeon, had anathematized Mr. Sellars, sotto voce, as a fat beast, and gone off grumbling to transmit the order to the page, who complained in a shrill voice that it was not his place; and the probabilities are that Rivière would have had to carry his boxes himself had not the distribution of gratuities commenced. Hearing of this, at one and the same time James and the page rushed off together, cannoned, and Buttons was floored, rolling over upon the carpet, where he began to whimper, and felt that the game was gone, when the ringing of the study bell drew off his enemy, and Buttons brought the boxes down in triumph, and also fetched the cab.

The time for departure at last. Madame Rivière made an effort over self, and, responding to Lady Lawler's warm farewell, kissed her on both cheeks.

"It is not that I like her, though," she muttered to herself.

The farewell seemed as cordial, too, on Sir Richard's side; for he felt some little liking for the suffering little woman who had been his guest.

"You must come and see us, Madame Rivière," he said; and then, catching his wife's eye, he added, "often."

Madame Rivière bowed, but made no reply. She took it as a simple meaningless compliment.

"Only wait a bit till they're gone," muttered Sir Richard, "and we'll come to an understanding who's to be master, my Lady Lawler."

He was all smiles the next moment, though; and, as he frankly shook hands with Rivière, he pressed four bank notes into his palm.

He felt the next moment more warmly towards his departing guest than had ever before been the case, for the notes were quietly refused.

"I thank you, Sir Richard—no!" was the reply accompanying them. "I am already too much in your debt. I cannot take them."

"Oh, nonsense," said Sir Richard, bluntly.

"Don't let the servants see. There, take them, old fellow—you'll find them useful."

"I thank you, my friend. I am as grateful as if I had taken many times as much; but I cannot let you give me money. Give me your sympathy in my troubles."

"Oh, yes, of course—of course," put in Sir Richard.

"And if," continued Rivière, not heeding the last remark—"if at any time I am sorely pressed, I will come to you for advice—for help, and you will not refuse?"

"But why not take it now?" said Sir Richard, who did not seem to approve of this prospective arrangement.

"Enough," said Rivière, firmly. "I cannot take it. Give me all your good wishes for my future success. Besides, I am not poor—I commence to-morrow to give lessons to miladi."

Those last words spoiled all. It was as if a black cloud had come over a sunny scene. A cold chill seemed to run through Madame Rivière, and an angry feeling of doubt and suspicion to attack Sir Richard. They were standing

in the study, and Madame Rivière shrank from Lady Lawler's side. The latter, however, either did not or would not see the action; while Sir Richard became on the instant grim and distant.

"Ah, my friend," exclaimed Rivière, quick to perceive the change, "I have offended you in not taking that money. Forgive me, but I cannot. I have feelings. I am poor, but I cannot forget that I am still a gentleman. Marie," he continued, turning to madame, "the cab is waiting, we must depart. Once more, Sir Richard, good-bye. Lady Lawler, you have been a good angel to me and mine: au revoir!"

As he spoke, he extended his hands to Sir Richard, and warmly pressed those of the baronet, but without receiving any response.

"Still in offence," he said. "Yet I cannot take it."

Then he turned to Lady Lawler, bent over her hands, and kissed them again and again; she starting slightly, as she felt that there was a tear left glistening beside one of her rings.

The next minute the exiles were outside the door, Rivière leading his wife swiftly away.

Lady Lawler made as if to follow them into the hall, but Sir Richard caught her angrily by the wrist, drew her back, and closed the door.

"No!" he exclaimed—"no more of it. We have done enough for them. The servants are there. Stay where you are. I'll have no more of it."

"For shame, Dick!" she exclaimed, hotly. "How dare you stop me? Come out at once to the cab. Servants, indeed! Let them chatter. Why, they will talk ten times worse if we do not go. And, besides, I know what they are: they will slight them, as they would have often done before, if I had not insisted upon the strictest attention. Come out at once. I will not have our visitors insulted by neglect now that they are leaving."

"This shall be the last time I give way," thought Sir Richard, as he opened the door and followed Lady Lawler to the hall, where they stayed until Rivière had handed madame into the cab; but just as he was about to follow, he started to see the wild, strange gaze his wife was directing at some one in advance.

Rivière turned on the instant, but was only in time to see the back of a figure hurrying away. It was sufficient, though, for him. He leaped into the cab, the door was closed, and he hastily waved his hand to those in the entrance; then, with brow contracted and pallid face, he whispered to the footman the address.

"Tell him to drive fast," he said, hoarsely, as the footman closed the door; and then he pulled up the window and shrank back into a corner of the vehicle, as it began to rattle and jangle over the newly macadamized road.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TRACKED.

"DID you see him, then?" whispered Rivière, after a few moments.

"Yes," was the shuddering reply; "quite plainly."

"Perhaps it was fancy?" he whispered, hoarsely, trembling like a leaf the while, as he leant forward to peer cautiously from the little window in the back of the cab.

"Can you see him?" whispered Marie.

There was no answer.

"Louis, Louis!" she exclaimed again, "is there danger? Let us go back to Grosvenor-square; they are rich and powerful there, and will protect us from him."

"I should have crushed out his life when I had him down there at my mercy," said Louis, hoarsely. "He is a reptile, a venomous snake, who should not be allowed to live—to track us here for our ruin."

"But, tell me," Marie whispered, in agitated tones, as he turned from the window, "could you see him?"

"No," was the response. "But it is evident that he has tracked us. He knew we were there, and bribed the servants to tell of our actions. Mon Dieu! he is not following us, because he will go back and learn of the footman where we are to go."

Madame Rivière sat, with hands clasped, pale, anxious, and trembling; while Rivière rose again to kneel upon the seat, and once more carefully look through the window.

He could see nothing, though, to excite his apprehension. As far as he could make out, they were not watched. No one was following the cab; and he sat down at length, gazing from side to side at the busy thoroughfares through which they were passing.

"It was but fancy, my child," he said, quietly. "We shall be thinking next that we see the gendarmes after us. Pooh! it was nothing."

He started; for just then Madame Rivière uttered a low cry, covered her face with her hands, and shrank into the corner of the cab.

"What is it? Good heavens, child, are you ill?"

"No, no! The window—the window!" she cried, hysterically—"looking in!"

Rivière glanced up at the little window, then thrust his hand out at the side, and called to the man to stop.

This took half a minute to effect, and then Rivière jumped out, and looked behind the cab.

Nothing there.

"What's the good o' stopping one for that?" growled the driver. "Just you call out, 'Whip behind!' if any boys get up, and I'll warm 'em."

Rivière glanced round, and then hastily re-entered the cab, which continued its journey.

"It was fancy, my child," he said, soothingly. "You are upset with our leaving. Never mind, we will soon be in peace."

"Some one—he—looked in," whispered Marie, glancing nervously at the back of the cab, in spite of her husband's incredulous smiles.

"We shall soon be there," he whispered, passing a protecting arm round her.

"But look—look out once more," she said nervously; and, yielding to her importunity, he once more peered from the little window.

"There is nothing, my child," he said, laughing. "What folly! Why should any one want to gaze in at us from the back? No one is even following us. It was all a mistake."

He looked long and carefully round once more; but his position was too circumscribed in its view for him to see that there was a keen-looking, ragged boy clinging behind, his legs thrust over the axletree of the hind wheels, which afforded him the seat to which he clung by the help of some villainous-looking spikes.

Rivière took his place once more by his wife's side, and the boy clung to the cab till it reached a shabby street—that is to say, a Soho street.

Here the boy descended actively, drew a couple of buttons and a leaden disc from his

pocket, and, creeping up close to the doorway of the house where the cab drew up, he began to play some mysterious game all by himself, said game consisting of throwing the buttons down upon the pavement, and then sending after them the leaden disc.

Hastily paying the cabman, Louis Rivière glanced up the street, and straight down, over the boy's head. Then, opening the door, he hurried his wife out, and into the passage of the dingy house; panted to and fro with his scanty luggage; and then, closing the door, he stood in a state of nervous trepidation almost equal to that of his wife, until he somewhat recovered his breath, and helped her to carry up their few worldly goods to the bare, shabbily furnished rooms upon the second floor, which he had secured at a rent which, to their slender funds, seemed frightful.

"Safe at last, my cherished one!" he said, as he closed the door, and led her to a rickety rush chair, gazing round all the while at the contrast to the place they had so lately left. "Safe at last, Marie!" he repeated.

"Would I could think so," she whispered, glancing at the door. "You do not believe that I saw him?"

"Well, no," he said, smiling; "though I half fancied it myself at first."

"I am sure," she said, shivering.

"Well, if you are," he said, cheerily, "what then? He may not have seen us—he may not be able to trace us out if he has seen us; and even if he did find us, what then? I could call in the police, and have him dragged away. But there, bah! let us not frighten ourselves with shadows: he is not here. He dare not show himself again. He is a coward—a worm who would shrink from me now that he has not the officers to back him up."

He took her in his arms, kissed her fondly, and she smiled in return. She was more cheerful than she had been for days.

"Yes," he said, banteringly, "I see. Madame has her own way; she comes at her wish to her own house; and look, bare as it is, she is in smiles."

"Yes, we can be happy here," she exclaimed,

clinging to him. "Shall we not be independent and free?"

"But, still, it is a poor place to bring you to, my child!" he said, pitifully, as he glanced round at the shabby furniture and ragged carpet. "And what a prospect!" he said, leading her to a chair by the open window; "a sad change from Grosvenor-square."

"Ah! Louis," she exclaimed, passionately, "it is a palace, so long as we are together, and nothing to keep you from me. What is that grand house to me, so long as it is full of misery and discontent for your poor wife? But, Louis, promise me you will not go near that place again."

"To what place?" he said, dreamily; for his thoughts were far away.

"To that house—to Grosvenor-square."

"Not go again! What, after their kindness?"

"Oh, Louis," she whispered, hoarsely, "say you will not go. I cannot bear it. Some evil will come of it to both, I am sure. Think of me, and the anguish I suffer when you leave me."

"To go there!" he said, bitterly.

"There—anywhere!" she cried.

"There, there, I am not angry," he said, softening. "But still that silly jealous feeling comes back, I see. As if I could love any one but my little one here!"

Marie nestled more closely in her husband's arms, sobbing for a while, but becoming calm as he told her of his plans—of how he would work, and save and raise money to buy them comforts; of how a régime must some day arise to flood France with sunshine for them both, when they would return and dwell there in peace.

He talked and talked on; but in spite of all his pictures drawn with sunshine in the midst, there was to him ever a dark cloud threatening to overshadow the fair scene, and that cloud took the form of Lemaire. He told his wife that it was mere fancy, but he was sure that his enemy was upon his track; and in his ignorance of English law, he determined that one of his first movements should be to ascertain what power Lemaire would have, and whether he

could put the English officers of justice upon his track.

"No," he thought, directly after; "the refugee who places foot upon British soil is safe."

As they sat there in the dingy room, they could look over the houses and catch gleams of the ruddy, sun-tinged skies—flecked, too, with soft fleecy clouds; and, dimmed as they were by the foul veil of London smoke, they still brought joy and gladness into their hearts. They wanted to feel, in their easily affected spirits, that they were free and happy, and that poverty was their only foe—one of whom they had no great dread, for in spite of past sufferings and anxiety, they had not felt its full power, and knew not how many were slain by its fell arrows year by year.

It was enough for Marie now that she had partly forgotten her fright, that she had her husband away from the influence of Lady Lawler; but back came the old feeling of misery, as for a moment she thought of Lemaire, and the face she had seen or fancied she had seen at the back of the cab.

Is there, or is there not, any occult influence

of mind upon mind, wherein, by invisible, intangible wires, a magnetic message of warning or advice speeds from one human being to another? Marie might have thought so, could she have known that about the time when those shuddering thoughts of her enemy came upon her, his were busy about her husband and herself. He was no mere street boy who had clung to the back of the cab, and it was not done for the sake of a ride. In fact, the lad had gone straight back to one of the courts leading from Oxford-street, and received sixpence for the information he had taken back in such haste that he was breathless.

But Marie Rivière did not know this. She only felt at times a dull, dead sense of impending danger, which Louis laughingly told her was due to excitement; and, lightly talking and caressing her, he had brought a smile to her lip and a faint colour to her cheek.

They depended for their dinner upon their landlady—a thin, angular woman, who seemed as if hard contact with the world had rubbed all the flesh from her bones and dried all sweetness

from her nature. She was jerky, too, in her ways, and looked suspicious and inimical at her lodgers. Her eyes were not strong, nor yet improved by the absence of lashes; but she worked very hard with them, and bored—if the expression may be used—bored her lodgers as if she was trying to reach below the surface, and find out how far they were prepared to pay their rent.

This amiable being also brought them tea—a very weak infusion of leaves, and a few unpleasant-looking slices of bread, scraped with buff-coloured grease. The meal raised symptoms of disgust in Rivière's breast; but Marie sat down smiling and happy. So he forbore comment: he only made resolutions for the future.

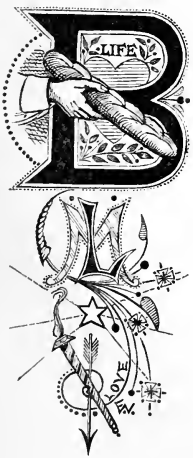
At last the evening, with the lamps starting into life here and there. They were alone and thoughtful. The morrow's duties had been discussed; their little, very little, store of money counted; and chairs were drawn up to the open window, where Rivière was about to treat himself to his sole luxury, a cigarette.

He had rolled it up, moistened the paper, and secured it; and now lit a match and applied it to the end, drawing the fragrant fumes till the little roll was incandescent, when a faint cry from Marie arrested him—the cigarette dropped from his fingers, and he remained as if petrified, glancing down at an upturned face, plainly seen for a moment beneath the street lamp, curiously watching the window where he sat.

A cold dew of perspiration broke out upon his forehead, and his fingers clenched. Then action came back, and he drew softly from the window, and glided on tiptoe towards the door.

CHAPTER XXV.

SEEKING A CONNECTION.



EFORE Rivière could reach the door, Marie was at his side, clinging to his arm and restraining him.

"Don't go," she whispered, her voice trembling with agitation.

"Loose me, Marie. I must stop this. Foolish woman!"

She had thrown her arms round him, and was clinging tightly, so that he had to exercise some force to free himself and hurry

down the stairs, hatless, into the street. It was not reached quickly, though, for the door proved an obstacle. He was strange to it, and the very simple fastening proved an enigma against which he was using unnecessary violence; till a little girl came from one of the lower rooms, touched the latch, and he was at liberty to rush out and across the street, half blind in his fury; but he was too late —no one was standing beneath the lamp.

Rivière looked alternately up and down aghast—he could scarcely believe it; and forgetting the length of time it had occupied him to gain the street, he asked himself whether this was some shadow that he was chasing, and for a few moments he coupled the figure he had seen with the face that had appeared at the cab window. Superstition seized the moment, and like lightning passed through his brain the scene outside the Paris house.

Yes, it must be so: he had killed Lemaire when he struck him down, and this was— Pshaw! was he a child?

He walked slowly up one side of the street

and down the other before slowly returning to his rooms, where he sat down very silent and moody for the rest of the evening.

It is a very easy thing to determine to make an income by getting pupils and teaching them; but somehow the pupils object to be caught. A beginner in London, possibly in all large towns, finds the great obstacle to his progress is that mysterious affair known as connection. He might get on very well, but he has no connection. A teacher, for instance, has pitched his tent in the midst of scores of people wanting to be taught, but he has no connection, and they go elsewhere. Great is the blessing enjoyed by the young man whose ancestors have been kind enough to act as warming pans for him, and kept the place at a pleasant temperature, ready for him to step into and be happy. It is without doubt one of the easiest things in life to be rich and prosperous—to get on if one's father and grandfather have been so self-denying as to do all the dirty work of establishing a connection, and suffer all the stings and disappointments

consequent thereon. There are exceptional cases, of course, where a man is fortunate enough to carve his own way upward; but these exceptions are rare; and your prosperous man, as a rule, has gone to work upon a good foundation.

Poor Louis Rivière had no basis upon which to work, and his experience of London soon became this—that your lazy, idle scamp can live, while your hard seeker after bread will often fail, getting so little of the staff of life that he has hard work to keep body and soul together.

A week slipped by, and the fact was more and more impressed upon him that he was not the only refugee in London. He could not pass from his door without meeting a gaunt-looking compatriot, very shiny of garb, and very much wanting in display of linen. The gentlemen of this cast, though, were mostly independent of aspect, hummed airs from operas, and smoked cigarettes; and more than one went about with a roll of music beneath his arm.

What was he to do to get this connection which he must have?

Marie could give him no advice; so he tried the baker, where he bought his bread by the foot.

This gentleman, who had been a Parisian barricader years before, shrugged his shoulders; and, holding his head on one side, said—

"But yes, it will come."

"But will it come soon?" said Rivière. "We must live. I cannot wait. Will these English seek me to teach?"

"But no," was the reply. "It takes time to get a connection. My wife and I we come over —escape—and I find that we are free, but ready to starve. What to do? I say I cannot sit and eat my fingers. So I think and think, and I say 'Boulanger!'"

"Baker?" said Rivière.

"To be sure, my friend. What better? I could not bake, but I could try; and if we did not sell it, we could eat. It was better than to sit and eat our fingers."

"And you baked?"

"My faith, yes, we baked—Celeste and I. It was not good. My faith, it was bad, that bread; but we did eat it; and it grew better, for we had a new oven, and people came to buy. And now, monsieur, behold!"

The baker held out a loaf of a yard long to Rivière, broke it in half, and displayed its honeycombed texture, and ended by pressing it into his customer's hands.

"Take it, my friend, for the sake of La Belle France," he said. "My friend must try something. We who come here all try, and we help one another when we can; but—what will you?—one cannot take the bit out of one's own mouth to put in another's."

Customer and dealer courteously raised hats, and Rivière marched gravely away with his broken yard of bread, which he deposited before his wife ere going out once more in quest of advice respecting the connection.

His next journey was to the charcutier's, where he left his address upon a piece of paper—he could not afford a card—with the request that, if the proprietor heard of any opening for

a professor (Rivière blushed as he uttered this word)—for a professor to give lessons, would he remember him?

Monsieur the charcutier would—that he would—nothing would give him greater pleasure; but—

"Yes," said Rivière, for the man stopped.

"There are so many hereabout, monsieur, and all trying to teach. It is that if all our compatriots were teaching our dear tongue, not one of those islanders would speak that barbarous English any more."

There was again the saluting, and Rivière went dreamily out into the street, to wander slowly along.

Well, it was one consolation—this Soho was very Parisian in its ways. He could meet pale Frenchwomen in their bonne-like caps. Here was an estaminet, there a café, and the familiar rattle of the dominoes upon the little marble tables. Dinner at price fixed announced here, table d'hôte over the way, and farther on an open window, the sound of singing, a hot puff of air, and the thumping of irons: the blanchisseuse

busily at work. A billiard table, too, and the familiar click of balls. Yes, this was very French, this place: he could not have done better. But how to live?

Now he stopped to listen to the running arpeggios performed by a violinist, and longed for his own instrument. For why? That he might give lessons. But how? The connection?

It was a dreary problem to solve, but he set himself to do it; and, after trying for two or three days, and making endless inquiries, he came to the conclusion that his wisest plan was to advertise.

One thing, however, troubled him greatly. In a weak moment, when his wife, with many a blandishment, had begged of him to give up all intention of going to the Lawlers', he had half promised that he would go there no more—laughed at her again and again for a weak, silly child, and kissed her as he told her that he had never felt his fancy stray from her for a moment.

That was a trouble to him, for he felt that he could not tell Marie if he determined to fulfil

his original intentions, and went to give the lessons. And yet it would be deceiving her. But it was for her good. They could not starve. Bah! he was no sentimental Parisian, that he could close up the doors and windows of his room, and take the long sleep, lulled to death by a pot of charcoal.

But he would wait a week.

He waited. Their last few shillings were nearly gone. Not an answer had come to any one of his advertisements; and though he had made inquiries, and prosecuted his search as far as was possible, still nothing; and he looked with dismay at the faint, despairing smile with which Marie always met him on his return.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FRENCH LESSON.

IT was no mere figure of speech: starvation was literally staring the Rivières in the face. People, as a rule, doubt it, but starvation, in all its skeleton nakedness, comes to a good many every year in London. By selling at a beggarly price dresses that had been given by Lady Lawler to Marie, they had lived for three weeks, and paid their landlady—who, though suspicious, had no idea that their means were so narrow.

One cause of uneasiness, however, had not troubled Rivière—he had seen no more of Lemaire; and, occupied as his mind was with

present troubles and the means of staving off the difficulties of the day, he had not seen that whenever he went out he was followed—perhaps because it was by different people, sometimes by a man, at others by a woman, who carried out their plans with such care that they did not for a moment raise his suspicions.

Rivière had staved off the trouble day after day, till he could hold out no longer; and he felt that he must lean upon the Lawlers for help. He told himself that it was his last chance; and, conscious in his own mind of his fidelity to his wife, and looking upon Lady Lawler's behaviour in its true light—a love of incense and attention—he determined to call, give his lessons, and, so as to spare poor Marie discomfort, keep from her the knowledge of where he had been.

It was a weak resolve—weaker than the half-promise he had made; but he thought he was working for the best, and could not foresee the evil that would follow—the despair and anguish that so simple a departure from the path of rectitude would entail.

To determine was, with a man of his restless disposition, to act; and, after making some excuse, he started off in good time one morning for Grosvenor-square.

It is no great distance from that square of Soho; but Louis Rivière was weak. His breakfast that morning had been the same as his dinner of the previous day—bread, bought with the proceeds of a pledged garment; and he had fasted that Marie, who was delicate, might have something to tempt her appetite.

He was weak, indeed; and yet he walked twice round the great square before he could summon up courage to go up to the door. Poverty was making a coward of him; and it was long since he had felt that sense of calm independence given by the possession of coin, enough and to spare.

At last he ascended the broad flight of steps, and paused. "Visitors" — "Servants" — the knocker: which should he attack?

He felt lower than the servants, for he knew that he was a beggar; and he hesitated for some minutes before, in despair, he gave a good

pull at the visitors' bell, to stand shivering the next moment, and nervous, as if he had committed some crime.

Rivière had done wisely, though; for his bold summons brought James up in haste, and the recollection of the gratuity made him rather less supercilious than might have been expected.

Was her ladyship in?

Well, James did not quite know; but he would go and see.

James yawned very loudly as he left the little Frenchman in the hall, and took himself slowly up the grand staircase, to return at the end of five minutes with the request that "Mounseer Rivvyer" would step upstairs.

"You know the room, I think?" said James, with a calm majesty of deportment.

"Yes, thank you," was the reply. And Rivière ran up hastily, wondering what his reception would be like. On the landing, though, he paused for a few moments, for his thoughts suddenly went back to Marie.

Was he being true to her? Was not this

breaking faith? He hesitated, and was disposed to turn back, till the recollection of their abject poverty spurred him on ; and the next moment he had turned the handle and entered.

"Oh, Monsieur Rivière, where have you been?" was the first thing he heard; and then he found himself clasping the hand of Lady Lawler, who was looking radiant, and smiling in his face.

"Miladi must excuse me," he said, "I have been much pressed."

Lady Lawler pouted.

"I ought to be pleased," she said. "And so you are very busy with plenty of pupils?"

"My faith, no!" said Rivière, with a shrug and a shake of the head—"miladi is my only scholar."

"But that is dreadful," said Lady Lawler. "Never mind, though — Richard shall get you a dozen next week. Now, what shall we read?"

Molière was fixed upon, and they took their seats at a table to begin; but they had only read about a dozen words before Lady Lawler

had to ask some question respecting Madame Rivière's health.

Then they recommenced, and the pupil read slowly, and not with a perfect accent, another line.

"You do not look so well as you did when you were here, Monsieur Rivière. You have not taken exercise enough."

"But, miladi, I have been constantly in the streets."

"Then it is too much. I thought there was something."

Rivière smiled feebly, and drew her attention once more to the French.

Lady Lawler gave an impatient shrug of her shoulders, and read on very badly half a page of the little book, half resenting the corrections from time to time suggested; and more than once there was a knitting of the brows, and sundry other tokens of impatience.

It was so very matter-of-fact, this learning French; and Monsieur Rivière was so staid and polite. He thought of nothing but the

lesson; and it had been taken up, to a great extent, as a pastime.

"Dear me, Monsieur Rivière, this is very tiresome!" she exclaimed at last, with a suppressed yawn.

"Miladi is tired. Shall we rest for awhile?"

"Oh, no—oh, yes—I don't want it to be too much like the old governess days. Talk to me in French, Monsieur Rivière, and let me try to answer."

"Try!" said Rivière, with an effort to nerve himself to offer the incense he knew was asked —"Miladi speaks French exceedingly well."

"Ah, méchant!" she exclaimed, smiling, "now you are flattering."

And it was evident the change suited her mood. She was a very handsome woman, and she knew it; but none the less it was satisfactory to be told so, and also that she was clever. So, in a light fashion, the conversation went on in bad French for awhile, Rivière exerting himself to the best of his ability to say the honeyed nothings suitable to the occasion, all of which sweetstuff her ladyship accepted,

willingly paying for it in smiles, without for a moment guessing at the bitterness in her visitor's heart.

"Now we'll read a little more, Monsieur Rivière," said the lady at last; "for I really cannot sit and listen to any more of your French compliments. But will you oblige me by ringing the bell?"

Rivière rose, and staggered slightly as he crossed the room to fulfil the mission; but he fought against the weakness, and it was not perceived, though his hostess remarked the pallor of his face as he returned to his chair.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked.

"Oh, no, no—my faith, no," was the reply, accompanied by a ghastly smile—"it is nothing."

"The sherry and biscuits, James," said Lady Lawler to the servant. Then, turning to Rivière, she continued—"Twice a week, Monsieur Rivière, you know—Tuesdays and Fridays, without fail; and I really will work hard, and you shall be very proud of your pupil."

"But I am always that," said Rivière, with an

effort to smile. "Who could exist in the presence of so much beauty—"

Rivière's speech was cut short by the stately stride of James, who entered bearing the wine and biscuits, which he placed by his lady's side, and left the room.

"Yes," said Lady Lawler, "you will come without fail twice a week. That is," she added, with a little grimace, "if you do not get tired of me and my tiresome blunders."

"My dear Lady Lawler," exclaimed Rivière, holding out one hand for the sherry she had poured for him, "I—"

He was ghastly pale. Had the wine been offered a minute sooner, it would have saved him; but now his hand dropped to his side, he half started up, and then sank back in his chair, with a cold dew upon his pale face, murmuring—

"Air—air—air!"

Poor fellow, he had had too much air of late; and, though reviving, it is wanting in nutriment.

"Oh, good heavens!" exclaimed Lady Lawler, starting to his side. "Monsieur Rivière, are you ill? What is the matter?"

A faint sigh was the only reply, and the dull eyes that gazed at her looked helpless and imploring.

"Oh, if a doctor were only here," she exclaimed, "he would tell me what it is."

He would have told her it was the first stage of starvation; but as he was not there to tell it, Lady Lawler knew it not, but ran across the room to drag at the bell, altered her mind, and did not ring it.

"The servants are so stupid," she exclaimed, helplessly — "they would only stand and stare."

She ran back to Rivière's side, tripping over her long dress three times in the short transit.

"Oh, poor man, what can I do for him?" she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "Monsieur Rivière, Monsieur Rivière! Oh, my dear Monsieur Rivière," she exclaimed, pitifully, "pray don't die!"

She ran to the bell again, but once more changed her mind, and went and this time did a wise thing—opened the window. Then she

ran back to his side, and took his hands, one after the other, to find them clammy and cold. Next, she tried to feel the pulse in the thin, white wrist; as if under the idea that the pressure of a finger there acted upon some peculiar spring in the human form, and would set the machine going again.

Failing to see any effect from pressing her fingers upon the right wrist, Lady Lawler tried the left; then let it fall in despair, and began to cry bitterly; for now Rivière lay back with half-closed eyes, perfectly motionless.

"What shall I do?" exclaimed Lady Lawler, at last waking to the fact that she must take action in some way.

Again she ran to the bell, but hesitated to pull.

"The servants would talk so," she thought, as she ran back.

"No water, of course," she said, pettishly; but catching sight of a flower vase, she snatched the flowers from it, threw them upon the table, and poured some of the water into her hand, but only to throw it from her with an exclamation

indicative of disgust, for the water had not been changed for two or three days.

Just then her eye caught the decanter and the wine glass, which she caught up and held to Rivière's lips; but without effect. So, failing water, she sprinkled his face with sherry, and then dipped her fingers in it and applied it to his temples; ending by wetting her handkerchief and bathing his face, with the effect of producing a faint sigh.

Encouraged by this, she took the decanter, soaked her handkerchief once more, and bathed his face and temples liberally.

Another sigh encouraged her, and now it struck her that the wisest thing would be to try and get him to swallow a few drops.

Flushed and excited, Lady Lawler filled the glass; and was too much occupied to hear the loud ringing which now came at the bell, though it did not sound very clearly in the softly furnished, close-doored drawing-room.

"Now," she said, kneeling down at Rivière's side, and holding the glass to his lips—"now, try and drink a little of this."

Poor Rivière, who smelt very strongly of sherry, sighed again, and was fast recovering consciousness; though he was still in that confused, dreamy state which succeeds a fainting fit, when the sufferer is more conscious of a singing in the ears and a feeling of hideous sickness than of anything else. He heard the words addressed to him, but they had hardly any meaning; though by degrees he became aware of the fact that an arm was passed beneath his head, half raising it from the back of the lounge in which he had been seated, and that he was being asked to drink something—all of which mingled with his sensations to make him think he had been very ill, and that his nurse was about to give him his physic.

"Pray drink some of this," said the voice at his ear more earnestly; and he essayed to swallow a mouthful, but only for the room to seem to swim round before his eyes once more; and with another sigh of weakness, his head sank upon Lady Lawler's shoulder as she knelt by his side, and he became unconscious of the fact that the drawing-room door suddenly opened, that Lady

Lawler uttered an exclamation, and that another exclamation of a decidedly masculine and forcible character was uttered by Sir Richard as he strode into the room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE POUDRE D'ENFER.

OUI! It was at the shop of Hippolyte Lalande, boot and shoe maker after the French fashion, that Lemaire passed, a day or two after Rivière and his wife had become domiciled in Soho. Monsieur Lalande's place of business was only in the next street, and he supplemented it by letting out the whole of the upper part of the house to ladies and gentlemen who found London a

safer home than Paris under his Majesty, King Louis Philippe. Monsieur Lalande was a very dark gentleman, with eyes that seemed all pupil; hair all short black brush, which came to a black point in the centre of his forehead; while this same white forehead went up on either side into a white point in his black hair. He seemed to wear three crisp black moustaches—one over each eye, and one under his nose; while all the rest of his round face was of a blue tinge, from close shaving of the stiff black stubble that eternally forced itself through the skin.

Monsieur Hippolyte was prosperous, and wore very white linen. He was a shoemaker; but his hands were white, and very deft at rolling up tiny cigarettes in rice paper, which he took from a little book of leaves. But then Monsieur Hippolyte never worked at the trade, inasmuch as it occupied his time to receive and send out orders, and to collect his rents.

Besides, did not Monsieur Hippolyte take deep interest in the affairs of the French nation, and speak in the discussions which took place upstairs? Yes.

Lemaire came to the door where Monsieur Hippolyte was smoking dreamily, and watching Paris—mentally, of course—for it was the fashion in his neighbourhood to watch Paris. Monsieur Hippolyte and his dear friends loved the beautiful city, and were ever waiting to give up the shoemaking, and baking, and charcutier's trades, and to go across, singing "Mourir pour la Patrie," and set people of excitable temperaments to pull up the paving stones, build barricades, and get bullets in their lungs; while Monsieur Hippolyte et Cie. became statesmen, and climbed to power for the time being, setting the whole nation to rights till the arrival of a coup d'état, or some other unpleasantry, which should sweep them from power; when, if they were on the alert, they crossed the Channel once more, and recommenced business in Soho until such time as it should seem suitable to go across to die for their country again—by deputy.

Monsieur Hippolyte, then, was watching Paris; and Monsieur Lemaire—for the time being and his own ends also a watcher of Paris—raised his hat half an inch and his eyebrows a quarter.

Monsieur Hippolyte removed his cigarette with one hand—gracefully, of course—raised his hat a full inch and his eyebrows half, and then said—

"Yes."

Then he turned in at the side door, after glancing to see whether madame was on guard; and madame proving to be on the watch, Monsieur Hippolyte led the way slowly upstairs, pausing to recover breath at each landing, till the attic floor was reached, and here a sound that had been on the increase as they ascended now became very audible.

Tink! clink!—tink! clink!—tink! clink!

As they stood listening the sound ceased, and was succeeded by the rattle and clang of a vice, as if something had been screwed up—an idéa verified the moment after by the sound of file biting upon iron—scrarp! scrarp! scrarp!—till they opened the door, and entered a large, low, sloping-roofed room, which extended all over the top of the house.

It was a singular-looking place, that attic, lit by three dormer windows, the two front apper-

taining to the sitting-room of the occupant, which also in one corner contained the bed, while the third gave light to the back part of the attic, which was a curious mingling of the engineer's workshop and the chemist's laboratory. On one side was a lathe, on the other a table covered with bottles, retorts, receivers, and stands. Beneath the window was a smith's bench, with vice, and rows of files and other tools; while the fireplace, in front of which stood a tiny anvil and block, was half furnace half forge, with a neatly formed pair of heavily-weighted bellows hard by.

A strip of wood, a couple of inches high, was nailed across the floor, to separate the workshop dirt from the cleanliness of the larger portion of the apartment, which was comfortably furnished, and contained a piano; while flowers were plentiful in the windows, and counteracted, with their air of refinement, the rough aspect given by the grim appurtenances of the back portion of the attic.

For a moment the visitor might have imagined that another Rivière was domiciled here;

but a glance at the work in progress showed how different it was from the mechanical contrivances of the little Frenchman when he was at home and in peace before the seizure.

Monsieur Hippolyte seemed quite at home here, for he entered without knocking; and it was evidently far from being the first visit of Lemaire, who, after saluting the presiding genius of the place, drew forward a chair, and sat himself cross-legged thereon.

The occupant of the room was in a closely fitting blouse, which buckled round the waist; and the sleeves were rolled back from his bony wrists, leaving his small but nervous hands free for the task upon which he was engaged. Like Monsieur Hippolyte, he, too, seemed to have been lately suffering from a brain fever, for his black hair was so closely cut that it stood up in an even pile; but here the resemblance ceased, for Monsieur D'Aulnay wore a closely trimmed, crisp beard, which clothed the whole of the lower part of his face, making it all black, save when his closely set eyes twinkled, and seemed to set free a pair of hard trap jaws, which un-

closed to display a set of extremely white teeth.

"Well, Doctor," said Lemaire, "and how does it progress?"

"To a marvel," said D'Aulnay. "Look."

Hastily throwing down the tool with which he had been at work upon something which looked like half an iron orange, screwed up in the vice, he walked to a shelf, and took down a stoppered bottle.

"Perseverance!" he said, with triumph flashing out of his wicked-looking eyes. "Who shall say that the children of La France do not work for her? See here, Lemaire: Hippolyte Lalande will tell you how I have sat night after night over my fire to make this. Failure, failure, failure—always failure! But at last —behold!"

He held out the bottle, full of a powder, in triumph.

"We might have bought it? True. But then these barbarous islanders must know why you buy it—what you would do with it—where you live; and then the suspicious canaille go to the

bureau of the police. Bah! I make it myself, and behold!"

He removed the stopper from the bottle, and, taking a quill pen, took out a small portion of the powder, which he threw down upon the floor.

It was as though anybody had dashed down a pinch of snuff; but the effect made the countenance of Lemaire to change to a deadly, sallow grey, though he did not move his chin from the arms which rested crossed upon the chair back. All the same, though, a glistening, dewy, cold sweat broke out upon his forehead, which he did not dare to wipe lest he should betray himself.

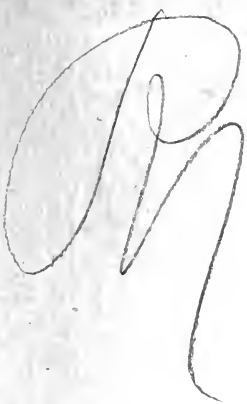
For as the little dust of powder touched the floor, it exploded with a keen, sharp, deafening crack, which, differing from the ordinary report of gunpowder, seemed to have with it a strange metallic ring that threatened to split the tympanum, and left a singing noise in the ears for a minute afterwards.

The report was so loud that the casements quivered, and the wires of the piano gave forth

a jarring, discordant twang; while, with the bottle held aloft in his left hand, the Doctor stood preserving the attitude which he had adopted in hurling the diabolical powder to the ground.

"Behold," he said again, "the poudre d'enfer for the enemies of my country."

END OF VOL. I.



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